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A scene from Norma
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Our first-ever Ring cycle—a gargantuan and extremely satisfying undertaking in every way—concluded with the triumph of Götterdämmerung this past spring. So, what’s next for HGO?

This season we begin an exciting six-year initiative on the big questions of life as they intertwine with music: Seeking the Human Spirit. No other opera company has attempted a long-term emphasis on a subject so intangible and yet so fundamental, and we are proud to be the first. We also think the timing is exactly right and that many people are ready to focus on that which is deep and true and unifying. It will be an exciting six years, and we look forward to sharing it with you. To learn more about our plans for Seeking the Human Spirit, please see “It Is Everything” (pp. 20–22) and “Join Us for the Journey” (pp. 23–26).

In this preview issue of Opera Cues, you can find out more about everything the 2017–18 season has to offer. As always, we have a wonderful season lined up for you. We open with a new production of the most popular opera in the repertoire—Verdi’s La traviata—along with Handel’s Julius Caesar, in James Robinson’s delightful production that places the action on a 1930s “Golden Age of Hollywood” movie set.

Our Holiday Opera Series continues with the world premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek’s The House without a Christmas Tree, a story that many people came to know during the 1970s through a popular made-for-TV movie. This opera is tailor-made for family audiences, and we hope to see you all there.

Two masterpieces return to our stage after an absence of more than 20 years, as we patiently waited for just the right casting. We are thrilled to offer Richard Strauss’s Elektra this winter with Christine Goerke in the title role and Bellini’s Norma in the spring with Liudmyla Monastyrska as the Druid priestess.

Elektra will be paired in the winter rep with Rossini’s ever-popular Barber of Seville in the brilliant production by the Spanish theater collective Els Comediants, and Norma’s spring rep partner will be a major new production of Bernstein’s brilliant West Side Story in what will be the work’s first performances by a major American opera company.

If that’s not enough to get your heart racing, we don’t know what will! We look forward to seeing you at the Wortham Center in just a few short weeks.

P.S. The HGO Studio Showcase on September 10 and 12 is a great opportunity to see all the 2017–18 artists of our renowned training program and to sample excerpts from a variety of works, including HGO’s mainstage operas Julius Caesar and The Barber of Seville. Studio Showcase is free to season subscribers, but non-subscribers may purchase mezzanine tickets. See page 53 for details.
In 2017 alone, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ has provided more than $3.6 million to more than 65 organizations and programs, including:

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Libiamo!
A Toast to Guild Volunteers

September 30, 2017
Please join us for the 27th annual Guild Fall Awards Brunch at the Omni Houston Hotel, as we honor stellar volunteers and enjoy performances by HGO Studio artists. For more information, contact chair Gwyneth Campbell at gcampbell@css-firm.com or visit our website.

October 4, 2017
Free: Opera Night Live with Arin Arbus, director of La traviata. Guests are welcome with reservations.

November 12, 2017
Volunteer Opportunity: HGOco High School Night Greeters

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NEWS & NOTES

HGO Releases *It’s a Wonderful Life*

HGO’s December 2016 world premiere recording of *It’s a Wonderful Life* is now available—just in time to enjoy it again during the 2017 holidays. It can be downloaded, streamed, or purchased as a CD.

Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer’s *It’s a Wonderful Life* was inspired by the beloved Frank Capra film of the same title and the short story *The Greatest Gift* by Philip Van Doren Stern. Created by one of the most highly acclaimed opera composer-librettist teams of our time, *It’s a Wonderful Life* was praised by audiences and critics alike. “*It’s a Wonderful Life* soars,” wrote the Houston Chronicle; Houston Arts+Culture called it “Stunningly new,” and Theater Jones called the score “Heggie’s most delightful concoction.”

The recording was released by Pentatone and can be purchased at pentatonemusic.com as well as other outlets.

Brünnhilde Rides for Pride

The car known as Brünnhilde—HGO’s entry in the annual Art Car Parade for the past several years—has now retired. After a brilliant career that included winning first prize in her first year (2008) and second prize this year, she made one final triumphant appearance in the Houston Pride Parade on June 24.

She was accompanied by a contingent of about 25 marchers, many from HGO’s LGBT-friendly group, Overture. HGOco singer Megan Berti, perched in Brünnhilde’s open mouth, sang throughout the parade.

Overture has around 150 members, who get together to enjoy opera and related events such as a season kick-off and holiday parties. There are no membership fees, and the group is open to all—the only requirement is an interest in opera. The Host Committee includes leaders from the LGBT and arts communities.

For information or to join, visit HGO.org/overture or email Kelly Nicholls at knicholls@hgo.org.

HGO Awarded Grant for *Seeking the Human Spirit*

Houston Grand Opera was recently awarded an OPERA America Innovation Grant for the multi-year *Seeking the Human Spirit* initiative, which we embark upon this season.

This is the first year the grant has been made, and HGO was one of 27 opera companies that received awards. Launched last fall and generously funded by the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, Innovation Grants support “exceptional projects that have the capacity to strengthen the field’s most important areas of practice, including artistic vitality, audience experience, organizational effectiveness and community connections,” according to the announcement by OPERA America, the national service organization for opera.

*Seeking the Human Spirit* is a six-year multidisciplinary initiative designed to highlight the spiritual themes in music, through mainstage operas and a variety of community programs.

“With our *Seeking the Human Spirit* community partners, we are developing programs all over the city,” said HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech, “in museums, schools, community centers, hospitals, public spaces, and parks as well as in the opera house—collaborating with entirely new communities. We are thrilled to receive the Getty Foundation’s support and OPERA America’s recognition for this ambitious undertaking.”

For more information about *Seeking the Human Spirit*, please see pp. 20–26.
THE ADDITION OF new staffers, the return of a former one, and a wealth of talent and enthusiasm among current members of the HGO team has resulted in new opportunities for them and for HGO.

Dale Edwards

HGO welcomes Dale Edwards as the new director of marketing. Before coming to Houston in late July, he made his career largely in New York, working in performing arts marketing and advertising in such organizations as the Metropolitan Opera, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and Disney Theatrical Production. He oversaw initiatives that brought more than 800,000 people to the Metropolitan Opera, and he also brings experience and expertise in digital marketing, which has become increasingly important to HGO over the past few years.

Several changes in the Artistic/Music Department will help it run at maximum efficiency.

HGO’s widely acclaimed chorus master, Richard Bado, returns this fall on a full-time basis as head of music staff, a position he held from 1991 until 2005, when he was recruited to direct the opera program at Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music. Bado will also continue as chorus master, a position he has held for nearly 30 years. He was honored with HGO’s Silver Rose Award for his exceptional work as chorus master in 2013, his 25th anniversary.

“With the re-addition of Richard Bado to our full-time artistic staff, Bradley Moore and our peerless music staff can become an artistic powerhouse for every Houston Grand Opera performer,” says Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers.

Bradley Moore

Bradley Moore, HGO’s head of music staff for the past three seasons, now becomes the associate music director. He will continue as music director of the HGO Studio but will now also serve as music director of HGOco, where he will oversee all musical aspects of the new works presented by HGOco, including commissioning.
Just in time for the Holidays

HGO’S WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

“[The] crazy-quilt score...may be Heggie’s most delightful concoction.” (Theater Jones)

“George Bailey would be proud.” Houston Chronicle

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Rod Gilfry • Joshua Hopkins • Anthony Dean Griffey
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For more information on advertising in Opera Cues, call Matt Ross at 713-417-6857.
workshopping, and producing. He will conduct the world premiere of *The House without a Christmas Tree* this season.

Paul Hopper and Daniel James have taken on additional responsibilities, in keeping with HGO’s new strategic plan for the next several years. With this plan, the company emphasizes its investment in administrative personnel by offering opportunities for growth.

Formerly the dramaturg, Paul Hopper takes the new title of assistant artistic director. He will still perform the functions of a dramaturg, those involved with planning and producing new works and the development of American composers and their works. He will also develop new working partnerships between the company and community organizations, including those that will be key in our *Seeking the Human Spirit* initiative.

Daniel James, HGO’s music administrator, adds the title of artistic media manager. Just as the designation implies, he will manage projects involving media and recordings. His first project was coordinating and managing the recording of HGO’s world premiere of Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer’s *It’s a Wonderful Life*, which was released worldwide September 1 by Pentatone. James will also share responsibility with Hopper for pre-curtain talks.

On the production side of the spectrum, Molly Dill has been appointed producing director, a newly created position. She has been with HGO since 2003 and a member of the senior management team since 2012, most recently as general manager. She began her career in stage management and is extremely experienced in opera production, so her new position brings her back to her roots.

One of her first accomplishments in her new role was hiring a technical director. She chose Paul Spittle, whose extensive experience includes running his own production and design consultancy in southern California and a 12-year tenure overseeing production builds at the Metropolitan Opera. Spittle, born in England and educated in the U.K. and in Vienna, makes a welcome addition to the HGO team.

Molly Dill
Paul Spittle

**NEWS & NOTES**

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Bradley Moore
Paul Hopper
Daniel James

“We are very proud that HGO continues to identify, attract, train, and develop stellar artistic and administrative talent,” says Managing Director Perryn Leech. “We look forward to a fantastic season.”
For information on providing leadership support for Seeking the Human Spirit, please contact Greg Robertson at 713-546-0274.

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING LEAD DONORS:

Mr. and Mrs. Oscar S. Wyatt Jr.
Harlan and Dian Stai

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Margaret Alkek Williams

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA 2017-2023

SEEKING THE
Human Spirit
HGO’s new SEEKING THE HUMAN SPIRIT initiative explores the inextricable relationship between art and our innermost selves.

“IT IS EVERYTHING”

By Patrick Summers
Artistic and Music Director
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair
VISITING THE ROTHKO CHAPEL

here in Houston, I once unexpectedly
found myself sitting in its cool, quiet
darkness with a young woman, perhaps
12, who was with her grandparents. In
short order, the grandfather said, loudly,
“This isn’t a chapel! There’s no altar!
Where are the paintings?” An attendant
politely shushed him but he remained
visibly frustrated; the place just didn’t
meet his preconceptions. His young
granddaughter moved away towards the
triptych farthest from the entrance, near
where I was, and the light subtly shifted
onto the great translucent painting just
as she approached it.

I noticed her eyes brimming with
tears, and I silently hoped this family
wasn’t coping with some tragedy, but her
tears seemed more joyous than cathartic.
Her grandmother came up behind her
and caressed her shoulders. “Well, it
must mean something,” the elder woman
shrugged, referring to the great canvas
above them. The little girl quietly said
to herself, unforgettably, “It means
everything.”

Seeking the Human Spirit, Houston
Grand Opera’s post-Ring artistic
initiative, will be the focus of about
half of our repertoire for the next six
seasons, roughly 18 mainstage operas,
each of which will be chosen for the
diverse spiritual themes created within
them. Seeking the Human Spirit will
also, most importantly, anchor a set of
community partnerships built around
broad spiritual themes, providing HGO
with collaborative relationships with
organizations like Houston Methodist
Center for Performing Arts Medicine;
Sacred Sites Quest; The Jung Center;
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The
Women’s Home; and the Rothko Chapel,
each of which will work with us to
develop joint programs that will broaden
the definition of what opera can do and,
hopefully, over time, change the cultural
conversation about the role of art in a
young and burgeoning city like ours.

As its name implies, Seeking the
Human Spirit is a journey, not a
destination at which we have already
arrived. It may surprise some that
perfection isn’t remotely a desirable
artistic reality, because perfection is
associated with the end of a journey and
is thus inevitably past tense. Be wary of
artists (or anyone for that matter) who
describe themselves as perfectionists,
for artists don’t strive to be perfect; they try
only to be better than they have been, to
grow and learn. In art, as in life, practice
doesn’t make perfect, (though it helps!).
Artistic journeys are like spiritual
quests—it is all about the quality of the
journey.

Great artists, like the greatest
opera singers, are famous for their
extroversion, as is the whole art of opera,
yet great artistry is generally born in a
more introverted place. The connection
of opera and music to spirituality is
enmeshed in this process, the looking-
inward-to-find-the-power-to-go-
outward quality of live performance. Is
opera simply a parade of elegant and
powerful vocalism, the grand night out?
As fun as that is, and as much as we all
love a nice night out, is that enough? Or
does opera carry within it some deeper
truths that are housed within its most
central art, music?

Music is a spiritual
force for one perhaps-
too-obvious reason:
music is a creation.

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The
Women’s Home; and the Rothko Chapel,
each of which will work with us to
develop joint programs that will broaden
the definition of what opera can do and,
hopefully, over time, change the cultural
conversation about the role of art in a
young and burgeoning city like ours.

As its name implies, Seeking the
Human Spirit is a journey, not a
Music is an organized response to nature and to silence, which makes it an art that shares many of spiritualism’s qualities: for those who love music, it comes with a system of beliefs adhered to very strongly and with deep devotion. Both give meaning to life, and both have histories that their followers consider sacred. Both inspire solemnity, comedy, gravity, and purpose. Though music involves an absolute science (yes, music is a science), it cannot be understood solely on scientific terms, and it shares this with spirituality. Knowledge of both must ultimately be put aside for their highest practice.

Music is a spiritual force for one perhaps-too-obvious reason: music is a creation. The few pieces of Western music that are unattributed to a specific author are those that cross cultures, such as the children’s taunt “nya-na-na-na-na-nyay!” a little pentatonic musical cell that has existed all over the globe for many centuries, though no one has yet been able to prove precisely why or how. For the rest of the created music, the great operas of Wagner, Verdi, and Mozart, those galvanizing products of humanities disciplines, there is clearly some higher human force at work—some might simply say “higher force”—which is the force of creativity and inspiration, and there thankfully appears to be no end to it.

Still, all artists know the feeling of handing their work over to a power greater than they. Indeed, that is ultimately what artistry is because it is what it must be. Verdi’s Requiem or Wagner’s Lohengrin are among the most powerful spiritual experiences in music, but we needn’t know anything about either composer’s beliefs to experience their force, one of the great paradoxes of art. Across every sphere of life, and great art teaches this so clearly: we are what we do and what we create; we are not simply what we believe or say.

Definitions of music sit astride two poles, each obviously magnified many times in opera: some describe music as the art of moving the emotions through combinations of sounds. And others prefer the concave of that definition, that music is an expression of emotion, and that we are moved to create and make it by that emotion. Neither definition is passive, nor are they fundamentally opposed to each other.

Art is at its finest when asking questions, and we hope that Seeking the Human Spirit, with the help of our new and exciting community partners, will be a forum where the most probing questions are asked. We will leave the answering of those questions to the disciplines best poised for answers: in science, religious practice, and philosophies, and to each individual. The great spiritual questions of life, after all, don’t have just a single answer. But every day that I experience opera and great music, I am more in agreement with that little girl in the Rothko Chapel, with that beautiful brevity that only children possess: “it is everything.”
ON MAY 22, 2017, HGO ARTISTIC AND MUSIC
Director Patrick Summers and Managing Director
Perryn Leech announced a new company-wide initiative
for HGO to supporters gathered at Cherie Flores
Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park.

Amid haunting performances by HGO Studio
artists and a video featuring one of Houston’s favorite
sopranos, Ana Maria Martinez, Summers and Leech
described the new initiative, Seeking the Human Spirit,
as the most ambitious project in HGO’s history, because
it will span six seasons and because of its complexity.
Seeking the Human Spirit is more than a series of beautiful operas—it’s an exploration of how music can touch our souls. While past initiatives have been focused on a single composer—like Britten or Janáček, or, most recently, Wagner and his incredible Ring cycle—Seeking the Human Spirit will do something no other opera company has ever attempted: it will program works and community activities that focus on spiritual questions.

For each of the next six seasons, three of HGO’s mainstage operas will be part of Seeking the Human Spirit. But we know that we can’t reach the entire community from the stage at the Wortham Theater Center, and we can’t make the impact we want to make alone.

That’s why as a cornerstone of Seeking the Human Spirit, HGO is partnering with six community organizations to create projects that will involve more people outside of the opera house.

According to Summers, “This initiative is about helping people find access to beauty. The more we can talk about that, and partner with organizations that can help us talk about that in their own ways, the more it changes the cultural conversation about what art is for.”

These are the initial organizations that have partnered with HGO for Seeking the Human Spirit.

**HOUSTON METHODIST CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS MEDICINE**

HGO is working with Houston Methodist’s Center for Performing Arts Medicine (CPAM) to further integrate music into the environment of care at the hospital through public performances, and offering arts experiences as therapeutic tools. Additionally, we’re working with Houston Methodist staff on research projects to understand how creativity works.
“Music has been shown to assist the healing process through improved clinical outcomes and meaningful patient and caregiver experiences. At Houston Methodist, this is the difference between practicing medicine and leading it,” says J. Todd Frazier, CPAM director.

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON
We are teaming up with our arts colleagues at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), to discover ways both music and the visual arts can speak to the soul and unite people of all backgrounds, using thematic tours of the Museum’s collections and performances by HGO artists in the galleries.

Says MFAH Director Gary Tinterow, “Visual art, like opera, stirs the soul, and has always been used as a form of expression for humanity’s deepest emotions. MFAH is proud to participate in this meaningful project that celebrates the power of art in our lives.”

THE JUNG CENTER, HOUSTON
Jungian analysts and psychologists will present educational opportunities for the public that will accompany Seeking the Human Spirit themes.

According to Sean Fitzpatrick, director of the Jung Center, “Developing greater creative expression is not only necessary for human development across the lifespan, it is fundamental to the healthy growth of our community. Great art reflects timeless and profound psychological truths, and this collaboration allows us to draw them into our collective awareness.”

THE ROTHKO CHAPEL
Houston’s iconic Rothko Chapel will host panel discussions on art and activism that correspond with Seeking the Human Spirit operas.

“My family values personal and confidential service from people who genuinely care about us. That’s why my husband, Jim, founded Houston Trust Company in 1994 with close friends—to help families with investment management, to serve as the family office, and to be there for our grandchildren’s grandchildren.”
“Art is a catalyst for change, and opera can shine a spotlight on societal issues,” says David Leslie, executive director of the chapel. “Seeking the Human Spirit will serve as an important conduit for social engagement among diverse groups, inspiring people to reflect on both personal and social questions. This sort of collaboration is of great interest to supporters of Rothko Chapel.”

**SACRED SITES QUEST**
This experiential program introducing Houston high school students to sacred spaces in the city and around the world will include visits to HGO for each of the three Seeking the Human Spirit operas each season. The visits may include rehearsals, meetings with the cast and creative team, attending a performance, and backstage tours.

“What I love about opera is it unites us all, connects us all. Opera truly is for everybody.”
—Ana María Martínez

“So often we are blind to the sacred qualities of the world around us,” says Reginald Adams, a public artist and co-director of the program. “Seeking the Human Spirit offers a framework for us to share with our students how opera can transmit those qualities. We hope the students will discover that the pursuit of making opera can be a sacred quest, and that the people of HGO will also be inspired by our students.”

**THE WOMEN’S HOME/ INSTITUTE FOR SPIRITUALITY AND HEALTH**
Residents of The Women’s Home Treatment and Transitional program participating in the home’s Courage to Search spiritual exploration course will attend two Seeking the Human Spirit performances each season, visit with HGO artists and/or production staff members, and engage in preparatory and debriefing sessions with Courage to Search volunteers and counselors.

Chief Program Officer Staci Young explains, “The mission of The Women’s Home is to help women in crisis regain their self-esteem and dignity, empowering them to become strong community members and lead healthy, productive lives. Our WholeLife™ Model of Care treats the whole person, and spiritual wellness is part of the healing process. In connection with HGO and the Institute for Spirituality and Health, Seeking the Human Spirit will give our residents a connection to opera where sweeping music and universal stories can move them in powerful ways.”

**THE JOURNEY**
Seeking the Human Spirit will take HGO to places it’s never gone before, but with the support of our community and our generous supporters, we’re ready.

Houston is a dynamic array of culture, commerce, beliefs, and ideas, and our population is growing younger and more diverse every year. It’s time for something new and profound, for something that channels all the optimism and energy of this vibrant community into something good. We’re looking for universal truths about the human condition, and we’re bringing the power of beautiful music with us on the quest. As Ana María Martínez points out, “Everybody, no matter where we are or who we are, we have a bit of that same quality of needing healing, of needing to connect with each other. What I love about opera is it unites us all, connects us all. Opera truly is for everybody.”

We can’t wait to see where this adventure takes us, and most of all, we can’t wait to share it with you.

**For more information about Seeking the Human Spirit, please see the article “It Is Everything,” by Patrick Summers (pp. 20–23) and visit the special section on our website (HGO.org) created especially for this initiative.**

**VARIATIONS ON A THEME**
HGO has already announced the operas that will be part of the Seeking the Human Spirit initiative for this season and the next. Each season’s STHS operas will have a theme: this season’s theme is Sacrifice, and the 2018–19 theme is Transformation.

The operas for this season—La traviata, The House without a Christmas Tree, and Norma—are described in the Opera Facts, pp. 31–45.

**COMING UP IN THE 2018–19 SEASON:**

- **October 2018:** Wagner’s The Flying Dutchman stars Polish baritone Andrzej Dobber as the Dutchman who is freed from a curse by love.

- **January 2019:** In Catán’s Florencia en el Amazonas, the title character—soprano Ana María Martínez—is magically transformed and reunited with her lover.

- **April 2019:** The world premiere of Tarik O’Regan and John Caird’s The Phoenix explores the spiritual journey of Mozart’s librettist Lorenzo da Ponte, portrayed at different stages of his life by baritone Thomas Hampson and bass-baritone Luca Pisaroni.
A WHIRLWIND YEAR WITH HGOco

BY CARLEEN GRAHAM
Director, HGOco

WHAT A WHIRLWIND YEAR IT HAS BEEN! IT IS HARD to believe that one year ago I moved to Houston to begin a new chapter in life. I have loved every minute of it and am grateful to work with such a wonderful company and a team that is passionate about engaging our community through collaboration.

This season is sure to be just as exciting as we develop new projects that span the range of our programs and welcome our new education manager, Alisa Magallón.

We are excited about three new works: one that will launch a new series; another for Opera to Go!, our touring program; and the third for Storybook Opera, a program that introduces very young children (Pre-K–second grade) to the world of storytelling through song.

In December, we will host a music workshop for a new work that will be the pilot for a web-based serial opera—Star-Cross’d. Composer Avner Dorman and librettist Stephanie Fleischmann
along with Junction Road Pictures will team with HGOco to create the pilot episode, *Can You See Me Shining?* The 12-minute episode is adapted from a story by Aryana Rose, originally heard on the Moth Radio Hour, and will be launched in April 2018. The series of short operas will eventually be filmed and available only for online audiences.

In January, Opera to Go! will premiere Kamala Sankaram and David Johnston’s *Monkey & Francine in the City of Tigers*. The adventure story about a monkey prince and his sister, Francine, teaches that two heads are better than one, girls can do anything, and it’s important to always do your homework!

Generously underwritten by HGO Trustee Connie Kwan-Wong, a new children’s book will join our Storybook Opera repertoire in March 2018. *The Armadillo’s Dream* tells the story of Sandy, an armadillo who lives on Buffalo Bayou and dreams of performing onstage at Houston Grand Opera. HGOco’s own Dennis Arrowsmith authored the delightful and moving story.

**The Bauer Family High School Voice Studio** (BFHSVS) will celebrate its 18th year this fall. We are delighted to welcome 12 participating juniors and seniors from Houston-area schools. Their year began with an all-day boot camp on August 15 and continues with monthly masterclasses and regular private voice lessons with one of our three new voice faculty—Barbara Clark, associate professor of voice at the Shepherd School of Music, Rice University; Hector Vásquez, affiliate artist in voice, Moores School of Music, University of Houston; and Nicole Asel, assistant professor of voice at Sam Houston University. Many BFHSVS members will also participate in HGO’s world premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek’s *The House without a Christmas Tree*. Participating in the BFHSVS requires a substantial commitment from the students, and they couldn’t do it without the encouragement of their private voice or choral teachers at school. We are grateful for their hard work and commitment.

This season, HGOco is pleased to partner with a number of Houston organizations for *Vietnam: The Houston Connection*, a yearlong Houston Public Media initiative in partnership with PBS, City of Houston Office of Veterans Affairs, Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, Houston Cinema Arts Society, City of Sugar Land Economic Development Cultural Arts program, Brazos Bookstore, and Inprint. The initiative will highlight the significance of the Vietnam War, the historical and cultural context of the Vietnamese American experience, and how these shape the Greater Houston community.

As we celebrate Veterans Day, two events will provide the capstone for our Veterans Songbook project. First, we present Tom Cipullo’s chamber opera *Glory Denied*, based on the oral history by Tom Philpott about the Vietnam War veteran who was America’s longest-held prisoner of war. This intense and moving work will be presented on November 6 and 9 at the 1940s Air Terminal Museum Hangar Building near Hobby Airport. Brazos Bookstore will host an evening with the author on October 25 at 7 p.m.

As part of an ongoing discussion about race and representation in the arts, HGO invited several Houston-area professionals from our diverse communities to meet as part of an ongoing Cultural Advisory Committee.
The committee will advise the company on sensitive cultural issues surrounding production and audience engagement. Our first meeting was held in June and we look forward to a rich dialogue this year.

This season, we will workshop a new commission that will premiere next season, in March of 2019. With music by Nkeiru Okoye and a libretto by Anita Gonzalez, *Home of My Ancestors* tells the story of a young, Chicago-based physician who returns to her childhood home in Houston’s Third Ward to attend her grandmother’s memorial service. During her visit, she rediscovers her purpose in the community and decides to remain to help revitalize it.

It has been a particular pleasure to work with and get to know the members of the HGOco Committee. Led by chair Judy Agee, this group is fiercely dedicated to HGOco and their support makes much of our programming possible. I also want to give a shout-out to the HGOco team—Dennis Arrowsmith, Emily Wells, Stacey Michael, and Alisa Magallón—for their passion and commitment to our mission.

I look forward to working with them and to everything the 2017–18 season will bring at Houston Grand Opera.

*See highlights from last season on p. 30.*
OPERA TO GO! performed *The Princess and the Pea* in the fall and a bilingual adaptation of *The Barber of Seville* in the spring to over 55,000 students and families around greater Houston.

Touring programs for our youngest audiences were presented at the annual Spring Break festivities at Discovery Green, including the debut of the new picture book *The World's First Tooth Fairy… Ever!* The book, authored by Zane Carson Carruth, a member of the HGO Board of Directors, included fun and interactive activities. She generously signed free copies of the book for appreciative families.

We presented two productions in exciting, non-traditional venues. The world premiere of *Some Light Emerges*, about Dominique de Menil’s struggle to create the Rothko Chapel, worked well at The Ballroom at Bayou Place. And as *Götterdämmerung* brought HGO’s first-ever *Ring* cycle to an end in the Wortham Center, HGOco presented *Das Barbecü*—a comic, high-energy retelling of Wagner’s *Ring* cycle—to sell-out crowds at Jackson Street BBQ and Neon Boots Dancehall & Saloon in April.

*Overboard*, composed by Mark Buller to text by Leah Lax, premiered on March 1, 2017, during the opening of the exhibition *Guardians of Sunda Strait: The WWII Loss of HMAS Perth and USS Houston* at the Julia Ideson Building. Underwritten by HGO Trustee Nana Booker, the three-movement commission was performed by an octet of local singers conducted by the composer. A recording of the work will travel to Australia with the exhibition when it opens in Perth.

We hosted more than 100 children at three Opera Camps in June and look forward to expanding our offerings for Houston-area youth next summer.
GO BEHIND THE SCENES OF OUR 2017–18 REPERTOIRE
WITH HGO ASSISTANT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR PAUL HOPPER.

A scene from La traviata
Photo by Brian Tarr
VERDI
LA TRAVIATA

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Violetta Valéry
Albina Shagimuratova †
Mané Galoyan †§
Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Bahr/
Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson
Fellow

Alfredo Germont
Dimitri Pittas
Yongzhao Yu †§
Albert and Ann Chao/
Carolyn J. Levy Fellow

Giorgio Germont
George Petean *
Sol Jin †§
Mr. and Mrs. James W.
Crownover Fellow

Conductor
Eun Sun Kim *
Bradley Moore §
Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair

Director
Arin Arbus

Set Designer
Riccardo Hernández

Costume Designer
Cait O’Connor *

Lighting Designer
Marcus Doshi *

Projection Designer
Christopher Ash *

Choreographer
Austin McCormick *

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

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera,
Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Canadian Opera Company

GUARANTOR: ConocoPhillips
GRAND UNDERWRITER: Margaret Alkek Williams

* Company debut † HGO Studio artist †§ Former HGO Studio artist § Alternate cast/date
Verdi’s illustrious opera about a doomed courtesan returns to Houston in a dazzling new production led by three eminent female artists. Arin Arbus’s poignant production probes deeply into the psyche of Violetta Valéry, portrayed by lauded HGO Studio alumna Albina Shagimuratova, and rising star conductor Eun Sun Kim makes her highly anticipated HGO debut.

BACKGROUND
La traviata holds the crown as the world’s most popular opera. Much of its appeal, as with all of Verdi’s mature works, lies in the sheer number and quality of show-stopping tunes. Each of the three principal roles—Violetta, Alfredo, and his father, Giorgio Germont—have recognizable arias that have permeated popular culture, particularly on the silver screen. Julia Roberts’s character in Pretty Woman is moved to tears when she attends a performance of the piece, which is an allegorical comment on her own journey as a high class prostitute, and Baz Luhrmann’s Moulin Rouge finds Nicole Kidman in a nearly identical circumstance.

THE STORY
An ethereal prelude establishes Violetta as a beacon of both decadence and delicacy as she prepares to host a party at her lavish Parisian home. The hostess, who is suffering from tuberculosis, is introduced to a new admirer, Alfredo Germont. He begs her to give up her reckless life as a courtesan, but she refuses to entertain a serious relationship and sends him away. Alone, she wonders if Alfredo might in fact be capable of the true love she so desperately desires.

Three months later, Violetta and Alfredo have blissfully been living together in the country, far from the societal scowls of urban life. Violetta is visited by Alfredo’s father, who insists she leave his son: the scandal of their relationship is tarnishing their family name. She loves Alfredo but agrees to the elder Germont’s wish, sacrificing her love for the sake of his family’s reputation. In a startling scene, Alfredo encounters Violetta at a party with a new suitor and hurls a fistful of money at her feet.

Some weeks later, Violetta’s health has significantly declined. She receives a letter from Germont in which he confesses that he told Alfredo about her sacrifice. Alfredo bursts in, begging for forgiveness, but it is too late.

SEEKING THE HUMAN SPIRIT
La traviata is the first piece in HGO’s groundbreaking six-year multidisciplinary initiative Seeking the Human Spirit. Designed to highlight the universal spiritual themes raised in opera and to expand and deepen Houstonians’ connections to opera and art, Seeking the Human Spirit and the operas associated with it will serve as a catalyst for significant conversations and programming about the role of art in today’s society. For more information about the initiative, turn to pp. 20–26.

ARTISTS
Arin Arbus returns to Houston Grand Opera to direct a new production that shines fresh light on one of opera’s most notorious divas. Arbus envisions Violetta as a smart businesswoman who chooses her own fate—this Violetta is no victim. Albina Shagimuratova and Dimitri Pittas, seen respectively last season at HGO as Konstanze in The Abduction from the Seraglio and Nemorino in The Elixir of Love, return as the tempestuous lovers Violetta and Alfredo. Romanian baritone George Petean makes his HGO debut as Giorgio Germont.
HANDEL
JULIUS CAESAR

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

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

Cleopatra
Heidi Stober †

Cornelia
Stephanie Blythe

Sextus
Megan Mikailovna Samarin †

Ptolemy
David Daniels

Achillas
Federico De Michelis †

Conductor
Patrick Summers
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Director
James Robinson

Set Designer
Christine Jones

Costume Designer
James Schuette

Lighting Designer
Christopher Akerlind

Associate Director
Michael Shell *

Fight Director
Adam Noble *

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra

BROWN THEATER
Sung in Italian with projected English translation

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

A Houston Grand Opera production

PREMIER GUARANTOR: The General and Maurice Hirsch Opera Fund
GUARANTOR: Robin Angly and Miles Smith
GRAND UNDERWRITER: Lynn Wyatt Great Artist Fund

* Company debut † HGO Studio artist ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
From the creative mind of James Robinson comes a visually scintillating production that blends the well-ordered practices of Baroque opera with the glitz and glamour of 1930s Hollywood. Caesar and Cleopatra’s story unfolds on the back lot of a film studio and comes to life on the silver screen.

BACKGROUND

Julius Caesar provides a wealth of opportunities for singers to show off their vocal abilities. The score is littered with da capo arias—meaning that the singer repeats the first section of the aria with his or her own vocal ornamentation. Singers often improvise these embellishments on the spot, thus each performance is unique. The title role was written for the castrato Senesino, who created 17 roles for Handel, and Cleopatra was written for the star soprano Francesca Cuzzoni. Both were members of Handel’s Royal Academy of Music, a company formed in 1719 by aristocrats who craved an endless supply of Baroque opera.

THE STORY

Rival factions battle for power in a 1930s film with an exotic Egyptian setting that is being shot in the City of Angels. At the start of the film, Caesar has arrived in Egypt after defeating Pompey in Greece. The plot thickens when Ptolemy—who reigns over Egypt with his sister Cleopatra—presents Caesar with Pompey’s severed head. Disgusted by the gruesome act, Caesar vows to punish Ptolemy. Achillas, Ptolemy’s advisor, offers to kill Caesar in return for Cornelia, Pompey’s widow. Ptolemy agrees; however, Achillas is unsuccessful.

Cleopatra crafts an elaborate plan to seduce Caesar so she can become the sole ruler of Egypt, but her plan is thwarted when rumors of an assassination plot reach Caesar’s ears. When she gets news that Caesar has been killed, she puts a new plan into action, but she is captured by Ptolemy. Caesar, who in fact survived the murder attempt, rescues Cleopatra and together they celebrate their victory and Egypt’s return to peace.

DID YOU KNOW?

HGO’s production of Julius Caesar will feature not one, not two, but three countertenors! The rarest of all voice types, the modern-day countertenor was born out of the Baroque tradition of the castrati—promising young male singers who underwent castration before puberty in order to stop their voices from dropping into a lower register. As the body grew, additional complications arose due to the lack of testosterone: castrati developed unusually long limbs and rib bones as well, which gave them a larger chest cavity and unrivaled breath capacity. But by the middle of the 19th century, castration had fallen out of popularity and was made illegal soon thereafter. Today, countertenors achieve a similar sound by singing in falsetto.

ARTISTS

American countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo, winner of HGO’s 2010 Concert of Arias, makes his HGO and role debut in the title role of Julius Caesar. His repertoire spans the Baroque to the contemporary—he recently portrayed the title role in Phillip Glass’s Akhnaten and created the role of the Stage Manager in Jake Heggie’s Great Scott. Acclaimed countertenor David Daniels, who sang the title role when this production debuted in Houston in 2003, returns this time as Ptolemy, and new HGO Studio countertenor Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen sings Nirenus.

Houston favorite and HGO Studio alumna Heidi Stober portrays the platinum blonde knockout Cleopatra, and mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe (last seen at HGO as Nettie Fowler in Carousel) plays Cornelia. Patrick Summers conducts this superb cast along with the HGO Orchestra playing at an elevated pit level.
RICKY IAN GORDON/ROYCE VAVREK
BASED ON THE HOUSE WITHOUT A CHRISTMAS TREE, A BOOK BY GAIL ROCK
THE HOUSE WITHOUT A CHRISTMAS TREE
A CHAMBER OPERA IN ONE ACT

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Addie Mills
Lauren Snouffer †
James Addison
Daniel Belcher †
Mills III (“Dad”)
Heidi Stober †
Miss Thompson/
Helen Mills/
Adelaide Mills
Grandma Mills
Patricia Schuman

Conductor
Bradley Moore
Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair

Director
James Robinson
Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair

Set Designer
Allen Moyer

Costume Designer
James Schuette

Lighting Designer
Christopher Akerlind

Juvenile Chorus
Karen Reeves

Director
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra
and Juvenile Chorus

PREMIER GUARANTOR: The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation
GRAND GUARANTOR: The Wortham Foundation, Inc.
GUARANTORS: The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts;
The Humphreys Foundation
GRAND UNDERWRITER: The Cullen Foundation

Commissioned and produced by Houston Grand Opera

* Company debut † HGO Studio artist ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
HEALED BY THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT.

Houston Grand Opera’s holiday opera series continues with the world premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek’s latest collaboration, The House without a Christmas Tree. A touching story about a family that experiences the healing power of the holiday spirit in a small town in Nebraska, this exciting new commission is the perfect piece to bring the family together for a shared, uplifting experience.

BACKGROUND

The House without a Christmas Tree is based on an original short story by Gail Rock that was later adapted as a children’s book. Known as the Addie Mills Series, Rock’s books paint vivid images of small town living that transcend generations. Rock based Addie’s adventures on her own life in rural Nebraska in the 1940s and ’50s.

THE STORY

It’s Christmas in New York, and Adelaide Mills, who is now a successful writer, reflects back on one Christmas when she was a young girl in Clear River, Nebraska. We flash back to 1962 and see why that Christmas in particular was so special.

“Addie” lives with her father and grandmother—her mother passed away just after Addie was born. While the whole town prepares for the holidays, Addie asks her grandmother why her dad doesn’t allow them to have a Christmas tree. Grandma Mills tells Addie it’s because he doesn’t want to spend the money, but Grandma knows it’s really because a Christmas tree would remind him too much of his late wife, Helen.

When Addie’s schoolteacher plans a contest to send the school’s Christmas tree home to a family that doesn’t have one, it comes down to Addie and her classmate Gloria Cott. Addie wins the contest and brings the tree home, but when her dad (James) finds it, he erupts and demands that it be removed from the house. With the help of her friend Billy, Addie sneaks the tree out of the house and delivers it to Gloria Cott, who is elated—her family didn’t have a tree because they truly could not afford one.

James learns about Addie’s sacrifice and has a change of heart. Through this act of charity, he sees his late wife’s compassion manifest in his daughter. He surprises Addie with a beautiful tree and together they place Helen’s homemade star on top.

SEEKING THE HUMAN SPIRIT

The House without a Christmas Tree is the second opera in Houston Grand Opera’s pioneering six-year initiative Seeking the Human Spirit. Each season will explore a different theme: the theme for the 2017–18 season is sacrifice. La traviata considers sacrifices for love while Christmas Tree contemplates sacrifice at the familial level. Norma, the third opera in the first season of the initiative, explores sacrifices for honor and duty. For information about Seeking the Human Spirit, visit pp. 20–26.

ARTISTS

Ricky Ian Gordon, who composed HGO’s A Coffin in Egypt in 2014, and Royce Vavrek, who penned the libretto for HGOco’s O Columbia in 2015, come together to bring this heartwarming story of sacrifice and generosity to life alongside a cast of Houston favorites.

HGO Studio graduates Lauren Snouffer and Heidi Stober, who last shared the HGO stage in our 2016 production of The Marriage of Figaro as Cherubino and Susanna, sing the roles of young Addie and the grown-up Adelaide, respectively. Heidi appears additionally as Addie’s late mother as well as her schoolteacher, Miss Thompson. It’s almost as if young Addie sees her mother everywhere she looks. HGO’s Bradley Moore conducts the company’s 64th world premiere, which also includes Studio alum Daniel Belcher and Patricia Schuman.
# R. Strauss

## Elektra

**CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Character</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aegisth</td>
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**Conductor**

Patrick Summers  
*Margaret Alkek Williams Chair*

**Production**

David McVicar

**Revival Director**

Nick Sandys *

**Set and Costume Designer**

John Macfarlane

**Lighting Designer**

Jennifer Tipton

**Chorus Master**

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

Houston Grand Orchestra and Chorus

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**GRAND GUARANTORS:** Mr. John G. Turner and Mr. Jerry G. Fischer; Mathilda Cochran  
**GRAND UNDERWRITERS:** Chevron; Dr. Jack S. Roth and Dr. Elizabeth Grimm

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*Company debut †HGO Studio artist ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
What’s a girl to do when her father is murdered by her mother and her mother’s new lover? Swear revenge until the walls run with blood.

Elektra is a harrowing evening of music drama that follows one of opera’s most dysfunctional families. In just one 100-minute act, Elektra leaves audiences breathless even after the final blood-soaked curtain falls. After a 25-year absence from the HGO repertoire, Elektra returns with Christine Goerke starring in the title role.

BACKGROUND
At the turn of the 20th century, Richard Wagner’s influence still cast a long shadow over opera. When Richard Strauss burst onto the scene with Salome (1905), he pushed Wagnerism to extremes with a modern, loud, and lurid score and followed up the work with the even more shocking Elektra (1908).

Strauss was inspired to write Elektra after seeing a performance of Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s 1903 play of the same title. Strauss was so struck by the musical potential of the play and its connection to advances in psychological theories of the time that he felt compelled to set the story to music. Hofmannsthal adapted his play for the libretto.

THE STORY
A clamorous leitmotif kicks off Elektra as we hear the music of the title character’s late father, Agamemnon. Outside the walls of the royal palace, five maidservants discuss Elektra’s unpredictable behavior after Agamemnon’s murder at the hands of Elektra’s mother, Klytaemnestra, and her new lover, Aegisth.

Elektra swears she will avenge her father’s death with the help of her brother, Orest. When this deed is accomplished, she will triumphantly dance atop the corpses of the perpetrators. Chrysothemis, Elektra’s sister, warns her against this plan but her advice falls on deaf ears.

Klytaemnestra reveals to her daughter that she has been haunted by nightmares and asks if there is some sacrifice she can make to the gods for relief. Elektra replies that only her mother’s blood will suffice.

A stranger brings news of Orest’s death. But in the emotional climax of the opera, informally called the Recognition Scene, Elektra learns that this stranger is in fact Orest, and they exult in the prospect of their righteous revenge.

Orest enters the palace to commit the deed as Elektra waits alone. A blood-curdling scream rings out into the courtyard, signifying Klytaemnestra’s death. Ecstatic, Elektra leads Aegisth into the palace and Orest completes the retaliation. In the staggering finale, Elektra euphorically dances to her own death.

FACT
David McVicar’s startling production features a coup-de-théâtre finale where the walls of the temple quite literally run with “blood.” Special consideration must be given to the viscosity and ingredients of this concoction so that it may properly roll down the steps of the palace while not staining the skin of the performer who dances in its collecting pool.

THE ARTISTS
Following her remarkable Brünnhilde in HGO’s first Ring cycle, dramatic soprano Christine Goerke performs the formidable title role of Elektra, who never leaves the stage after her entrance just a few minutes into the opera.

Goerke’s fellow Richard Tucker Award–winner Tamara Wilson makes her role debut as Elektra’s sister, Chrysothemis, and American mezzo-soprano Michaela Martens makes her HGO debut as the murderous Klytaemnestra. Greer Grimsley and Chad Shelton sing the roles of Orest and Aegisth and Patrick Summers conducts the HGO Orchestra and Chorus in Strauss’s relentless, horrifying score.
ROSSINI
THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Figaro  Lucas Meachem *
Count Almaviva  David Portillo
Rosina  Sofia Selowsky †
Don Basilio  Eric Owens †
Doctor Bartolo  Peixin Chen †
Berta  Yelena Dyachek †

Conductor  Julian Wachner *
Director  Joan Font
Set and Costume Designer  Joan Guillén
Lighting Designer  Albert Faura
Choreographer/Associate Director  Xevi Dorca
Chorus Master  Richard Bado †

Guarantors: Houston Methodist
GRAND UNDERWRITER: Edward and Frances Bing Fund

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera, Canadian Opera Company, and Opéra National de Bordeaux

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

BROWN THEATER
Sung in Italian with projected English translation

JAN. 26  FEB. 08  FEB. 10
JAN. 28m  FEB. 03  FEB. 10

Photo by Felix Sanchez
Figaro, Figaro, Figaro! Opera’s favorite barber is back in a delightful, colorful production from Els Comediants, a Spanish artists’ collective formed by actors, musicians, and creative types of all stripes and colors. Els Comediants is the ideal team to bring Rossini’s most popular opera to life, marrying their engaging visual storytelling with the score’s infectious melodies and vocal fireworks.

BACKGROUND
Pierre Beaumarchais’s scandalous trio of French plays, known as the Figaro trilogy, shocked 18th-century audiences with their unapologetic commentary on changes in social attitudes following the French Revolution. *The Barber of Seville*, the first installment, is where we first meet a number of familiar characters that appear in both Rossini’s *Barber* and Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*, which is based on the second installment. American composer John Corigliano completed the unofficial operatic trilogy with his 1991 opera *The Ghosts of Versailles*. The titular barber, Figaro, proved to be one of the most shocking aspects of the plays—through these stories, Beaumarchais gave voice to a peasant and told stories of lower-class workers standing up for themselves in the face of their aristocratic employers.

THE STORY
Count Almaviva arrives at Dr. Bartolo’s, hoping to woo and rescue Bartolo’s ward, Rosina. Bartolo keeps her under lock and key in hopes of marrying her himself. Figaro, the count’s barber, offers to help.

Rosina’s music teacher, Don Basilio, shares the news that Count Almaviva is in town and is looking for Rosina. Bartolo suggests a smear campaign against the pesky count and asks that a marriage contract be drawn up between Rosina and himself. Disguised as a drunken sailor, Almaviva arrives and reveals his identity to Rosina but chaos erupts and he is sent back to the drawing board.

This time the count arrives dressed as a substitute music teacher and gains entry to the house. Meanwhile, Figaro steals a key critical to the escape plan from Bartolo while giving him a shave. Bartolo catches on to the scheme and calls for the notary so he can marry Rosina, but Almaviva beats him to the punch.

FUN FACT
Els Comediants has designed and directed two other Rossini operas for Houston Grand Opera—2007’s *Cenerentola* and 2012’s *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. Founded in 1971, the group sees theater as an art of the senses: any place can be a setting and any element can be a theatrical object that changes and shifts as the stories unfold. For instance, the pink piano in Rosina’s famous music lesson scene returns elsewhere as a rowboat! The company’s productions are spectacles and visually thrilling, which made them a natural choice to create the 1992 Barcelona Olympics Closing Ceremonies.

THE ARTISTS
HGO’s knockout cast includes some artists singing their signature roles and others making highly anticipated role debuts. American baritone Lucas Meachem makes his HGO debut as Figaro, a role that he has sung impeccably to critical acclaim in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, London, and Vienna. David Portillo, last seen at Houston Grand Opera as Tamino in Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, will sing the shape-shifting Count Almaviva—Portillo made his Metropolitan and Vienna State Opera debuts in this challenging, florid role. Illustrious HGO Studio graduate Eric Owens takes a comedic turn as Don Basilio alongside recent graduates Sofia Selowsky and Peixin Chen, who make exciting role debuts as Rosina and Dr. Bartolo. Composer-conductor Julian Wachner makes his house debut on the podium, leading the HGO Chorus and Orchestra in Rossini’s zippy score.
WEST SIDE STORY

BASED ON A CONCEPTION OF
JEROME ROBBINS

BOOK BY
ARTHUR LAURENTS

MUSIC BY
LEONARD BERNSTEIN

LYRICS BY
STEPHEN SONDHEIM

ENTIRE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION
DIRECTED AND CHOREOGRAPHED BY
JEROME ROBBINS

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Maria
Andrea Carroll †

Tony
Norman Reinhardt †

Anita
Alicia Gianni †

Riff
Brian Vu *

Conductor
Timothy Myers

Director
Francesca Zambello

Choreographer
Julio Monge *

Set Designer
Peter J. Davison

Costume Designer
Jessica Jahn

Lighting Designer
Mark McCullough

Associate Director
Eric Sean Fogel *

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra

HUMOROUS NEW PRODUCTION

BROWN THEATER

Sung in English with projected English text

APR. 20
APR. 22m
APR. 28m
APR. 28
MAY 01
MAY 03
MAY 04
MAY 06m

Originally produced on Broadway by Robert E. Griffith and Harold S. Prince by arrangement with Roger L. Stevens.

West Side Story is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. www.MTIShows.com.

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, and Lyric Opera of Chicago

PREMIER GUARANTOR: Houston Grand Opera Endowment
GUARANTORS: BBVA Compass; The Humphreys Foundation
GRAND UNDERWRITERS: Vinson & Elkins; Margaret Alkek Williams

* Company debut  † HGO Studio artist  ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
A MODERN-DAY ROMEO AND JULIET

In celebration of the Bernstein Centenary, Houston Grand Opera proudly offers the first production of *West Side Story* by any major American opera house. Francesca Zambello creates a groundbreaking new production that frames the racially charged story within the beautiful diversity of 21st-century America.

BACKGROUND
The original 1957 Broadway production of *West Side Story* featured two creatives at the peak of their careers—composer Leonard Bernstein and director/choreographer Jerome Robbins—alongside a young Stephen Sondheim making his Broadway debut as librettist. Nominated for six Tony Awards, the piece went on to have a successful run in London’s West End before taking off on an extensive U.S. tour. It was quickly turned into one of the quintessential American movie musicals starring Natalie Wood, earning 10 Academy Awards including Best Picture.

THE STORY
The Sharks and the Jets—two rival gangs of teenagers—fight for control over their neighborhood in the Upper West Side of New York City. The police intervene and warn them to stop fighting. Riff, the leader of the Jets, makes plans to challenge the leader of the Sharks, Bernardo, to a rumble at the dance that night and recruits his friend Tony to join.

At the dance, Tony experiences an instant connection with Maria, Bernardo’s sister, but when Bernardo sees Maria dancing with a Jet, he is furious and sends Maria home. Riff and Bernardo confront each other and set the time for their rumble as Tony sneaks off to serenade Maria from the fire escape outside her bedroom.

The rumble takes the lives of each of the gangs’ leaders—Riff and Bernardo. Maria learns that her brother died at Tony’s hands and is shattered, but they quickly make plans to run away together, to flee the endless cycle of violence. Plans go horribly awry when Tony hears false news that Maria has been killed and begs for one of the Sharks to end his life. Maria enters as the trigger is pulled and Tony falls into her arms.

FUN FACT
“*West Side Story* finally at La Scala!” wrote the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* when the piece received its 1999 debut at the same house that premiered many of Verdi’s most revered works. It went on to play for 18 sold-out performances, underscoring the universality of a love story that knows no borders. *West Side Story* enjoys immense success in the opera houses of Europe, particularly at Komische Oper Berlin, which has given 85 performances of the piece in the last 15 years alone. It’s high time that *West Side Story* joins the repertoire of American opera houses.

THE ARTISTS
Francesca Zambello, one of the most highly praised directors working in American opera, creates a new production for Houston Grand Opera in collaboration with Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Glimmerglass Festival. Julio Monge, a protégé of the piece’s original choreographer, Jerome Robbins, brings the iconic dance sequences to life. Jessica Jahn, who created the stunning period costumes for 2012’s *Mary Stuart*, tackles a completely different time period and style: New York in 2018.

Andrea Carroll, who captivated HGO audiences as the ingénue Julie Jordan in *Carousel*, makes her role debut as Maria, joined by fellow Studio graduate Norman Reinhardt as Tony. Reinhardt debuted the role in 2016 at the Salzburg Festival alongside Cecilia Bartoli as Maria. Alicia Gianni returns to HGO as Anita and Brian Vu makes his HGO debut as Riff. Timothy Myers conducts Bernstein’s iconic, rhythmic score, leading a company of 33 singers, dancers, and actors.
BELLINI
NORMA

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor: Patrick Summers
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Director: Kevin Newbury

Set Designer: David Korins *

Costume Designer: Jessica Jahn

Lighting Designer: Duane Schuler

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

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Norma: Liudmyla Monastyrska
Adalgisa: Jamie Barton ‡
Pollione: Chad Shelton ‡
Oroveso: Peixin Chen ‡

BROWN THEATER
Sung in Italian with projected English translation

APR. 27 | APR. 29m | MAY 05 | MAY 08 | MAY 11

A co-production of San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Canadian Opera Company, and Gran Teatre del Liceu

GRAND GUARANTOR: The Wortham Foundation, Inc.

* Company debut ‡ HGO Studio artist ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
CAUGHT BETWEEN PASSION AND CONSCIENCE

The Italian bel canto tradition reaches its highest summit in Vincenzo Bellini’s virtuosic Norma. To close HGO’s 63rd season, we offer a feast for the eyes and ears, a work whose title role is so demanding that its notable interpreters have included the likes of Maria Callas,Montserrat Caballe, and Joan Sutherland. Ukrainian soprano Liudmyla Monastyrska, who has dazzled Houston audiences as Tosca and Aida in recent seasons, makes her title role debut alongside Jamie Barton as Adalgisa.

BACKGROUND

The title role served as the model for many of Verdi’s tragic heroines, and when Wagner wrote Tristan und Isolde, he expressed his wish that Isolde would become his Norma, acknowledging the power of Bellini’s creation. Norma is an opera of extremes, demanding unparalleled vocal technique and emotional concentration from its performers. Norma marks the zenith of dramatic bel canto, and for many, it is the finest “singer’s opera” ever written.

THE STORY

Norma takes place around 50 B.C. during the Roman occupation of Gaul.

The high priest, Oroveso, leads the Druids in a prayer to protect them in times of war. Pollione, one of the Roman leaders, admits that he no longer loves Oroveso’s daughter, the high priestess, Norma, with whom he has two children who are cared for in secret. Unbeknownst to Norma, Pollione has fallen in love with another woman—a novice priestess, Adalgisa. Norma swears allegiance to her people and promises to lead the revolt against the Romans when the time comes.

Privately, Adalgisa prays for strength to resist Pollione, but when he appears in the grove, her prayers prove to be in vain. Norma learns that Pollione has been summoned back to Rome and worries that he will abandon their children. Adalgisa admits to Norma that she has a lover—but when Norma learns his identity, her fears quickly turn to fury.

Weapon in hand, Norma considers murdering her children to spare them a life of shame. After a change of heart, she begs Adalgisa to take the children and leave with Pollione, but Adalgisa swears allegiance to Norma.

Norma incites the Gauls to war against the Romans: all that is needed is a sacrifice. Pollione is caught breaking into the temple to abduct Adalgisa and is sentenced to death. Driven by despair, Norma orders the funeral pyre to be lit but offers herself as the sacrifice and leaves her children in Oroveso’s care. Inspired by her selflessness, Pollione realizes he does in fact love Norma and joins her in death.

SEEKING THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Norma considers the concept of sacrifice for honor on the grandest of scales. The Jung Center Houston, a community partner of HGO’s new Seeking the Human Spirit Initiative, will offer two lectures that explore the concept of sacrifice in both La traviata and Norma on October 19 and April 26. For information, visit junghouston.org.

THE ARTISTS

Kevin Newbury’s critically acclaimed production of Norma sets the action in a stark world of heightened emotions and actions with sets and costumes that evoke the stylized series Game of Thrones. Liudmyla Monastyrska and Jamie Barton team up as Norma and Adalgisa, two of the most demanding roles in the bel canto repertoire.

Chad Shelton, who has tackled diverse roles spanning from Mao Tsetung in Nixon in China to Froh in Das Rheingold at Houston Grand Opera, adds the role of Pollione to his already extensive repertoire. Peixin Chen adds his sonorous bass voice to the role of Oroveso, and Patrick Summers conducts the HGO Chorus and Orchestra.
UNSUNG HEROES

DAWN GILLESPIE

KEEPING HGO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT CONNECTED.

BY PERRYN LEECH
Managing Director
Sarah and Ernest Butler Chair
PERRYN LEECH: Governance is a highly complex part of the business and it is something very few people aspire to be when they are young! How did you get started?

DAWN GILLESPIE: I was born in Dallas, but I moved to Lafayette, Louisiana, pretty soon after. My parents were college sweethearts from Bowling Green, Ohio, and ended up on the West Coast while my dad was attending graduate school at USC. He had taken a job with ARCO Oil and Gas Company as a geophysicist and they were in Dallas while he was undergoing training. Afterwards, they transferred us to Louisiana, and a few years later my brother was born.

So how long were you in Lafayette?

We ended up living there for nearly seven years, and it was a wonderful place to grow up. My parents made great friends who we are still close with today. I remember having a lot of crawfish boils and zydeco dance parties. Since the public education system was lacking, my parents and their friends formed a cooperative that built The Community School, a bilingual school—English and French—where I attended kindergarten and first grade.

During that time, my parents were fearful of being transferred, so they never put down roots and we constantly moved from one rental home to the next. They finally bought a beautiful, old, French home and then six months later my dad was transferred to Bakersfield, California, which was about as different from Lafayette as it’s possible to be. Our lives were
suddenly about being outdoors and exploring the mountains and the beach. I loved it!

That’s quite the change. Were you or your family interested in the arts?

I was a dancing fanatic and danced all the time. I had started taking classes in Louisiana and really got into it when we were in California. Also, my maternal grandfather was very musical. He led the USO band in World War II and encouraged his grandchildren to play musical instruments, so I also played the flute from third to eighth grade. I was never very good at sitting still and practicing. Dancing was just a better outlet for me to express myself.

Then, when I was 12, it was time to move again, and this time we were transferred to Houston and settled in Sugar Land. It wasn’t great to move during middle school, and trying to go from an outdoors lifestyle to urban and concrete was definitely a transition. I had a hard time making friends at school and was very grateful that I was “adopted” by a group of high school kids in my neighborhood. They were into drama, and I took to it immediately.

Did you carry on with your dancing?

Yes, but it took a bit of a back seat when I was in high school. I started taking theater classes, but I knew I didn’t want to act. Even though I never felt shy when dancing, I have terrible stage fright when it comes to public speaking. Theater was a good social outlet for me so I became interested in backstage and front-of-house work.

I also kept very busy babysitting, which was a great way to earn money for college. My junior year, I got my first real job as a “party girl” for kids’ parties on the weekends and evenings at Imaginations, a ceramic paint store in the First Colony Mall.

What did you decide to do after high school?

I was interested in a variety of things and explored several options including the law. In the end, I decided to pursue a major in philosophy, arts, and business at a great liberal arts school, Whittier College. The coursework was designed to connect students with various industries, and I realized that I could have a career working in the arts in some capacity.

During college, I started working for oil and entertainment mogul Marvin Davis in L.A., but I never really felt at home in that community. I came back to Houston for the holidays and realized there were a lot of great things happening here. I transferred to Davis’s Houston office and wanted
to get more involved in the arts scene. I started volunteering at Holocaust Museum Houston and became very passionate about its mission. When the museum lost its executive assistant, I applied and got the job.

What an amazing opportunity for you! Obviously, they saw great potential in you.

The director, Susan Myers, was immediately a mentor to me, and over the next few years I was given all sort of other opportunities to grow. I took over the museum’s traveling exhibition program and learned archival and art management. I also curated a photojournalism exhibition of Darfur that was linked to Fotofest. During this time, I was able to learn more about governance and helped restructure the museum’s board leadership. I grew so much, but after eight years, I was ready for a new challenge.

Why did HGO catch your eye?

I had made a list of nonprofits and community leaders that I was interested in learning from. I was invited to see Aida at HGO with a Holocaust survivor and was completely blown away. It was extraordinary—the singing, the dancing, the costumes, and the sets. I had also heard great things about how the company was run and its vision for connecting the arts with the community.

When I saw that the Development Department was hiring, I thought it would be a fabulous opportunity to learn more about the performing arts. I applied and was hired as the development operations coordinator. After a few months, the governance role become available and I just knew it was a better fit for my skills and experience.

I was thrilled to move into that position and be able to work alongside you and Patrick Summers. It has definitely been challenging and has provided me invaluable opportunities, especially being able to support the work of the strategic vision. I absolutely love being part of an arts company of this scale, doing work of this quality, and bringing beauty into the lives of our patrons.
Thomas “Tommy” Glass says there was never a defining moment when he suddenly knew that he wanted to be an opera singer. Instead, each achievement led gradually to the next.

In Edina, Minnesota, where he grew up, he says, “There was a robust arts program. I liked to sing and I was in chorus, so in eighth grade I auditioned for the musical Footloose.” By the time he finished high school, he had performed in 10 or so musicals.

When it was time for college, Tommy chose the University of St. Thomas (Saint Paul) because it offered a music business program—“I thought it was too risky to try and make a living performing,” he says. The program required voice lessons, and that’s when a teacher noted his talent and encouraged him to follow a performance path. He gained valuable experience singing with Minnesota Opera, where he studied both piano and biology.

His career goals didn’t coalesce until pianist Warren Jones came to Lawrence to give a master class and concert with Anthony Dean Griffey. Jonathan was especially fascinated because he also sings, just for fun. “So I learned what a vocal coach was, and once I decided that was what I wanted to do, I knew I had to study with Warren Jones.”

Jonathan credits Jones not only with making him a better musician but a better person. “One of his many sayings is, ‘Don’t follow the singer. Play the music together.’ It teaches you how to work well with people and be constructive but also helpful.”

This season, Jonathan is most looking forward to coaching La traviata as well as The House without a Christmas Tree by Ricky Ian Gordon, a composer he greatly admires.

Music was always a given in his Wisconsin household as Jonathan Gmeinder was growing up—born to musical parents, Jonathan remembers the entire family “making music all the time.” So it was natural for him to be musical, too.

Like lots of children, he started with piano and hated practicing, so he stopped taking lessons. But when a friend came to the house and played some classical pieces, his interest revived in a hurry. “I didn’t know that kind of music existed,” he says. He resumed his lessons and eventually attended Lawrence University, where he studied both piano and biology.

His career goals didn’t coalesce until pianist Warren Jones came to Lawrence to give a master class and concert with Anthony Dean Griffey. Jonathan was especially fascinated because he also sings, just for fun. “So I learned what a vocal coach was, and once I decided that was what I wanted to do, I knew I had to study with Warren Jones.”

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This season, Jonathan is most looking forward to coaching La traviata as well as The House without a Christmas Tree by Ricky Ian Gordon, a composer he greatly admires.
Collaboration is the name of the game for a pianist/coach in an opera company, and it seems to come naturally for Canadian Blair Salter. As a young girl, she played piano and several band instruments, but she enjoyed playing with friends much more than playing solo. She hadn’t considered collaborating with singers until, as an undergraduate, one of her professors needed pianists for a summer opera program. “That’s where it all started,” she says.

She has just finished her doctoral degree at the University of Michigan, where she studied with the renowned Martin Katz. “He’s a phenomenal teacher who is full of knowledge and enthusiasm about what he does. He encourages his students to keep in touch with each other, and it ends up being a family.”

Blair heard about the HGO Studio from recent Studio alum Kirill Kuzmin, who also studied with Katz. “I remember him preparing for the Studio audition, and that’s when I first became aware of the level and the prestige of the program,” says Blair.

For the upcoming season, she looks forward to working on HGOco’s presentation of Glory Denied by Tom Cipullo, a composer she met while participating at Fall Island Vocal Arts Academy. “I did one of my lecture recitals on Tom’s music, so it’s exciting to get to play something that I had researched and spoken to him so much about,” she says.

Anthony Robin Schneider claims both New Zealand and Austria as “home”: his New Zealander mom was performing as a street musician in Vienna when she met his Austrian dad. Their international lifestyle—Anthony has lived in Austria, France, England, and New Zealand—offered marvelous training for a future opera singer, as Anthony speaks three languages fluently. Anthony grew up singing and discovered a real passion for performing.

After a stint at Oxford University, Anthony returned to New Zealand for the remainder of his undergraduate work, where he found greater flexibility in the curriculum. There is also a great deal of support for singers in New Zealand: Anthony received support from the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation, and the diva herself came to hear him in New York and offered welcome advice.

He was performing at the Glimmerglass Festival when he was asked to audition for the HGO Studio. “I was excited that they took an interest in me,” Anthony says, “and I realized that Houston offered everything I need at this stage in my career.”

He is excited about singing the role of Dr. Grenville in La traviata and studying Oroveso in Norma next season, but he is also looking forward to the appreciative atmosphere at HGO that he’s already heard so much about. “It meant a lot to me that it seems like a family,” he says.

Growing up in Georgia, Richard Smagur was much more familiar with country music than opera. But he had been told he had a nice voice and he loved to perform, so he kept singing and decided to study voice at Shorter College. Even then, Richard admits that he still wasn’t “super keen on opera” until he heard a recording of Pavarotti singing “Di quella pira” from Il trovatore. “I thought, ‘I’ve got to do that,’” he says.

He immediately began to soak up everything he could about opera, and in 2012, his journey led him to HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy (YAVA) before heading to Indiana University to earn a master’s degree. About YAVA, Richard says, “I saw that they took care of you because they wanted you to succeed. It’s very nurturing and is a place that tries to set you up for a great career.” Those positive impressions led him to audition for the HGO Studio.

Last March, Richard was a Grand Finals winner in the Metropolitan Opera’s 2017 National Council Auditions. “Winning was almost surreal. To have that nod of approval moving forward and knowing that you’re going in the right way, that’s the most important thing,” he says.

HGO audiences will see him as Gastone de Letorieres in La traviata and Young Servant in Elektra. He will also study Count Almaviva in The Barber of Seville and Pollione in Norma.
THE SUMMER BRINGS REPORTS on our HGO Studio artists and alumni from all over the world. While they’re off performing with opera companies across the globe, reviews, notes from colleagues, and reports from the artists themselves flood our inboxes. Watching our HGO artists leave the “nest” and achieve wonderful things is one of the most satisfying parts of my work, and this summer has been no exception.

Reviews are already in from San Francisco, where incoming baritone Thomas Glass had great success singing scenes with orchestra in the Merola Opera Program’s Schwabacher Summer Concert. On the other coast, mezzo-soprano Zoie Reams impressed at Wolf Trap Opera with a tour-de-force performance of the leading role of Clarice in a Rossini rarity, La pietra del paragone, alongside alumna Megan Mikailovna Samarin and incoming bass Anthony Robin Schneider. Recent grad Ben Edquist has had an adventurous summer at Wolf Trap, as well, where he starred in Philip Glass’s The Fall of the House of Usher. Another 2017 graduate, Federico De Michelis, drew raves for his performances of Timur in Turandot and Mr. Flint in Billy Budd at Des Moines Metro Opera. There are many HGO Studio performances yet to come, and it’s thrilling to see that the artists are held in high regard by colleagues and friends in the industry.

Great performances like these are only possible when an artist has a well-developed acting technique and a deep understanding of musical drama, and I’d like to take a moment to recognize six people who are working together at HGO to develop these skills in the Studio’s singers. We’re fortunate to have three of them living in Houston—stage director Tara Faircloth and movement instructors Adam Noble and Melissa Noble. Director and acting instructor Ed Berkeley visits from New York each year to spend a couple of intensive weeks working on improvisation and acting technique, and HGO assistant director Omer Ben Seadia has been tremendously helpful in developing stagecraft and analyzing text. It is gratifying to see the growth produced by this team approach to the Studio’s drama curriculum; the artists change and mature so tangibly throughout the season, and seeing their summer performances always reveals the synthesis and gathering of these skills into a total performance. Finally, as the Studio returns in the fall, and our new artists join us, we start our work again with the help of Studio Showcase director David Paul, a talented emerging artist who also has a passion for working with young singers to advance their dramatic performances.

This season’s Studio Showcase will open with a matinee performance on Sunday, September 10 (2:30 p.m.), followed by an evening performance on Tuesday, September 12 (8 p.m.). We hand-pick scenes to show off the artists, so it never disappoints! This season’s lineup includes scenes from Idomeneo, I puritani, Roméo et Juliette, Don Carlo, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Samson et Dalila, Eugene Onegin, and previews of our upcoming season from Handel’s Julius Cæsar and Rossini’s The Barber of Seville. This is your first chance to get to know the 2017–18 HGO Studio artists and see them perform portions of roles that will be the bread-and-butter of their future. Tickets are free to subscribers and quite affordable ($20) for single-ticket buyers. Call 713-228-6737 (OPERA) or visit HGO.org for more information.

—Brian Speck, HGO Studio Director
HGO STUDIO FACULTY & STAFF

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Bradley Moore, Music Director
Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair
Jeremy Johnson, Studio Manager
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Jill and Allyn Risley/John M. O’Quinn Foundation Endowed Fund Fellow
Mané Galoyan, soprano
Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Bahr/Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson Fellow
Thomas Glass, baritone
Harlan and Dian Stai Fellow

Julie Muller, English Instructor
Nicole Uhlig, French Instructor
David Paul, Showcase Director
Sponsored by Marcheta Leighton-Beasley
Edward Berkeley, Guest Acting Instructor
John Churchwell, Guest Coach, and Pierre Vallet, Guest Coach
Sponsored by Kathleen Moore and Steven Homer

Drama and Movement Faculty
(Tara Faircloth, Adam Noble, Melissa Noble, and Edward Berkeley) sponsored by Anonymous

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

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

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

Hotel accommodations for YAVA generously provided by the Lancaster Hotel.

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

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Jill and Allyn Risley/John M. O’Quinn Foundation Endowed Fund Fellow

Mané Galoyan, soprano
Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Bahr/Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson Fellow

Thomas Glass, baritone
Harlan and Dian Stai Fellow

Jonathan Gmeinder, pianist/coach
Bill and Melinda Brunger/Lynn Guggolz/Ms. Marianne Kah Fellow

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Beth Madison Fellow

Richard Smagur, tenor
Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow

Peter Walsh, pianist/coach
Nancy and Ted Haywood/Stephanie Larsen Fellow

Yongzhao Yu, tenor
Albert and Ann Chao/Carolyn J. Levy Fellow

SAVE THE DATE

SEP. 10 & 12

STUDIO SHOWCASE
The singers and pianists of the HGO Studio perform a program of opera scenes in Wortham Center’s Cullen Theater on Sept. 10 (2:30 p.m.) and Sept. 12 (8 p.m.). Free to season subscribers; nonsubscribers may purchase mezzanine tickets at HGO.org.

NOV. 16 & 19

HGO STUDIO RECITAL SERIES
Hear HGO Studio artists perform in the intimate and elegant salon at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 1406 Kirby Drive, November 16 (7:30 p.m.) and November 19 (5 p.m.).
HGOco is HGO’s broad initiative for connecting the company with the community in which we live. Among HGOco’s many projects, the touring group Opera to Go! performs family friendly works in schools, churches, and community venues. Each year, HGOco also offers student performances (for school groups only) of a popular opera.

**STUDENT PERFORMANCES** allow young people to experience the drama and fun of live opera at The Wortham Theater Center. This is an unforgettable opportunity for students to see and hear the dazzling artistry of grand opera.

Teachers will receive a curriculum-based study guide to help prepare for the opera. Upon request, HGOco will provide a free presentation, led by an HGO docent, at your school.

Student performances are designed for student groups and chaperones only.

**FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS**

*La traviata*—Verdi’s most romantic work—is the perfect introduction to live opera for students in grades 9–12. The dazzling heroine, Violetta, a glamorous Parisian courtesan, finds real love at last, but gives it up in a final act of selflessness. The new production is filled with lavish sets and grand costumes, and Verdi’s famous score beautifully paints a glittering Paris.

This special full-length performance is in the Brown Theater of the Wortham Theater Center, with ticket prices ranging from $13 to $28. Please visit HGO.org for more information.

**FOR ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Students in grades 4–7 will connect with *The House without a Christmas Tree*, a world premiere opera by Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek. The heartwarming story follows Addie Mills, a young girl who is smart and energetic, just like the mother she never knew. Addie has no idea why her father resents the holidays, refusing even to allow a Christmas tree in the house. But when she brings home a tree she won in a school contest, it paves the way for a miracle of sorts—her father’s broken soul is transformed.

Student Matinees will be presented on Dec. 5, 12, and 13, 2017, at 10 a.m. in the Cullen Theater of the Wortham Theater Center. All tickets are $10. Please visit HGO.org for more information.
NO BREAD CRUMBS NEEDED

Opera to Go! revives a classic for the fall with Hansel and Gretel. The famous fairy tale from the Brothers Grimm comes to operatic life in a 45-minute, family-friendly production. In the familiar story, two siblings are lost in the woods. Their growing hunger draws them to a magical gingerbread house—but the unpleasant tenant may have more than baking on her mind!

Hansel and Gretel tours to area schools and community centers from September 18 through December 15. The tour is highlighted by three free performances at Miller Outdoor Theatre, October 2–4, at 11 a.m. daily. To book performances, call 713-546-0231 or visit HGO.org/operatogo.

BRAND NEW BOOK FOR STORYBOOK OPERA

Generously underwritten by the Connie Kwan-Wong Foundation, The Armadillo’s Dream, our very first commissioned children’s book, will enter the repertoire of the Storybook Opera touring program in March 2018. Storybook Opera brings storytellers to your school, library, or community center for captivating, 30-minute presentations.

The Armadillo’s Dream is based on a Bolivian folk tale and features an armadillo who, more than anything, just wants to sing. HGO’s own Dennis Arrowsmith adapted the tale, transporting it to Buffalo Bayou. He named his armadillo Sandy in memory of Sandra Bernhard, the founding director of HGOco.

The new presentation will make its debut with a series of free public performances around the city.

HGOco FUNDERS

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The activities of Houston Grand Opera are supported in part by funds provided by the City of Houston and by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts.

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

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SPOTLIGHT

BILL AND ELIZABETH KROGER

Houston Grand Opera is delighted to welcome Manolo Sánchez to the HGO Board of Directors. Manolo became a subscriber to HGO in 2009 and has represented BBVA Compass as a corporate trustee.

Manolo is currently the chairman of BBVA Compass. From 2008 until January 2017, he served as CEO. He has worked for BBVA, the bank’s Spain-based parent company, for more than 25 years. A native of Spain, Manolo spent his summers in Ireland and earned degrees from Yale, the London School of Economics, and the College of Europe.

Manolo, who worked in New York, Paris, and Madrid earlier in his career, says Houston’s arts institutions rival the cultural infrastructure in other world-class cities, and he has been a passionate advocate for making the arts accessible. He is a governing director of the Houston Symphony; a board member of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and KIPP Houston charter schools; and chair of the board of trustees at the Post Oak Montessori School. He also is a member of the Greater Houston Partnership.

His honors include the 2017 Arrival Award recognizing immigrant achievement from the University of Houston Law Center’s Immigration Clinic.

Manolo lives in Houston with his wife, Daniela, and their three children.

WINSTEAD PC

Houston Grand Opera is delighted to count Winstead PC as one of our wonderful corporate supporters.

Winstead is among the largest business law firms in Texas, providing a core range of legal services to mid-market and large businesses. From its well-known reputation in real estate, financial services, energy, and technology to its corporate and high-stakes litigation practices, Winstead delivers practical knowledge and responsive service. And it’s all backed by a get-it-done attitude.

With offices in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, and The Woodlands, as well as Charlotte, North Carolina, Winstead is committed to service in the community. In addition to supporting organizations like HGO, Winstead attorneys are active volunteers for a wide range of social programs, outreach activities, and civic projects, providing pro bono legal assistance to both individuals and nonprofit organizations.

The firm supports HGO’s mainstage productions and our annual Opening Night Dinner event. Tom Van Arsdel, managing shareholder, and shareholder Mike Hilliard represent the firm as HGO Trustees. We look forward to seeing Tom and his wife, Kristie, and Mike and his wife, Kay, at HGO this season.

HGO warmly welcomes Bill and Elizabeth Kroger to our Patrons Circle. Bill is a partner at Baker Botts and Elizabeth is a partner at Martin, Disiere, Jefferson & Wisdom.

The Krogers became involved with HGO during our collaboration with Bill on the 2016 world premiere of John L. Cornelius II and Janine Joseph’s What Wings They Were: The Case for Emeline, which also involved Richard Husseini and others from Baker Botts. The opera told the true story of a free woman who sued for her freedom in 1847 and Peter Gray, her lawyer – who went on to become one of the founders of Baker Botts. Bill has long been interested in the firm’s historical impact on Houston. He provided the research that was essential for telling this powerful story.

“We wanted to become more involved in HGO, because the ability of an opera to find new stories and to share them with the community in a passionate way is inspiring.”

In addition to supporting HGO, Bill serves on the executive board of Communities in Schools and the board of the Alley Theatre. He is also the first Vice President of the Houston Bar Association. He and Elizabeth have three children: Ben, Rebecca, and Caroline. We’re thrilled to count the Krogers as members of the HGO family.
ENCORE OPERA BALL AFTER PARTY KICKOFF
On March 8, HGO young professionals gathered at Forty Five Ten in anticipation of the Encore Opera Ball After Party. Encore chairs Carrie and Sverre Brandsberg-Dahl welcomed the group to the new River Oaks District store, where guests were treated to Champagne splits. Store mannequins were dressed in carnival-inspired masks, setting the scene for the Carnevale di Venezia to come.

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG CAST PARTY
To celebrate the April 22 opening of Götterdämmerung, lead sponsors John G. Turner and Jerry G. Fischer hosted guests at a late-night party following the performance. The room was packed to the gills as the crowd toasted the cast and creative team on the final installment of HGO’s four-season Ring cycle.
PATRONS CIRCLE RECITAL
On May 8, members of HGO’s Patrons Circle were treated to a special performance by tenor Lawrence Brownlee, in town performing in The Abduction from the Seraglio, and Bradley Moore. Hosted by Jackson and Company at The Corinthian, the event honored Patron-level donors for their support of HGO.

LAUREATE SOCIETY

YOUR LEGACY COUNTS!
Who will enjoy world-class opera because of your generosity?
By including HGO in your will or as a beneficiary of your retirement plan or insurance policy, you become a partner with HGO in perpetuating the art form we love, sustaining its vibrant good health for future generations. As a member of the Laureate Society, your legacy gift helps ensure opera forever in Houston.

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

HGO.org/LaureateSociety
THE POWER OF THE PURSE
HGO held its second “Power of the Purse” event on May 4 in the Wortham Green Room. This annual luncheon and panel discussion delves into various topics related to charitable giving among women. This year’s panel included HGO Laureate Society members Mathilda Cochran, Rhonda Sweeney, and Nancy Williams and was moderated by estate attorney Karen Gerstner.

YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS
Ticket sales alone cover only 25 percent of HGO’s annual costs. We rely on the generosity of donors like you to aid us in creating world-class, uncompromising operatic programs.

Your donation to HGO grants you exclusive benefits like valet parking, Masterson Green Room access, and invitations to our behind-the-scenes lecture series.

Will you support HGO with your Annual Fund gift today?
To donate or for more information, visit HGO.org/Giving or contact Jennifer Wijangco at 713-546-0704 or jwijangco@hgo.org.
The Impresarios Circle is Houston Grand Opera’s premier donor recognition society. These vanguard supporters who provide annual support of at least $100,000 are instrumental to HGO’s success. For information, please contact Greg Robertson, chief advancement officer, at 713-546-0274.

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

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

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

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

BBVA COMPASS
HGO is privileged to partner with BBVA Compass, a U.S. subsidiary of BBVA, a Spain-based global financial services group founded in 1857. BBVA Compass, committed to financial education, diversity, and the arts, was a lead corporate sponsor of HGO’s Ring cycle and also supports the NEXUS Initiative, HGO’s affordability program. Manolo Sánchez, BBVA Compass’s chairman, serves on the HGO Board of Directors.

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

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

CONOCOPHILLIPS
For over 30 years, ConocoPhillips has supported various programs at HGO, from special events to mainstage productions, including the 2017–18 season-opening production, Verdi’s La traviata. In 2009, the company gave a major multi-year grant to establish ConocoPhillips New Initiatives, a far-reaching program that allows HGOco to develop new and innovative education and community collaboration programs. Janet L. Carrig, ConocoPhillips’s senior vice president, legal, general counsel, and corporate secretary, serves on the HGO Board of Directors and also as senior chairman of the HGO Endowment Board.
BOBBIE-VEE AND GERALD COONEY

Bobbie-Vee and Jerry have been HGO subscribers since 1979 and have generously supported HGO productions of the most beloved classics of the Italian repertoire, including Aida, La bohème, Tosca, and Madame Butterfly. The Cooneys also supported HGO’s innovative commission Cruciata de la Luna (2010, 2013), the world’s first mariachi opera. They have been active supporters of all HGO special events for many years, from the Opening Night Dinner, which Bobbie-Vee chaired in 2004, to Concert of Arias, which the couple chaired together in 2014. HGO is honored to have Bobbie-Vee serve on the HGO Board of Directors.

THE CULLEN FOUNDATION

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

THE CULLEN TRUST FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

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

HOUSTON ENDOWMENT, INC.

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

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA ENDOWMENT, INC.

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

HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO™

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

HOUSTON METHODIST

This year, Houston Grand Opera celebrates 10 seasons of partnering with Houston Methodist, the official health care provider for HGO, and the Center for Performing Arts (CPAM). The only center of its kind in the country, CPAM comprises a specialized group of more than 100 physicians working collaboratively to address the specific demands placed on performing artists. In addition to the first-rate medical care CPAM provides HGO artists, Houston Methodist also generously supports HGO special events and mainstage productions such as The Magic Flute (2014–15), The Marriage of Figaro (2015–16), and last season’s The Elixir of Love. HGO is fortunate to have Dr. Barbara Bass and Dr. Mauro Ferrari, president and CEO, Houston Methodist Research Institute, serve as Houston Methodist’s corporate trustees.

THE HUMPHREYS FOUNDATION

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

DONNA KAPLAN AND RICHARD LYDECKER

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

NANCY AND RICHARD KINDER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**CYNTHIA AND ANTHONY PETRELLO**
Cynthia and Tony are deeply committed to improving the lives of Houstonians through their support of health care and the arts. Tony is the chief executive officer of Nabors Industries, the world’s largest land-based drilling contractor. Cynthia, a community leader, currently serves on the HGO Board of Directors and Special Events and HGOco Committees. HGO is grateful for the Petrellos’ support of HGOco, special events, and mainstage productions. The Petrellos also support HGOco programs for children, including the Student Performance Series and Opera to Go!

**THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER**
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Schlumberger, Ltd., is a leading corporate contributor to HGO, supporting the main stage and a wide range of special projects over nearly 20 years. Schlumberger’s leadership gift was integral to launching HGO’s ongoing affordability program, the NEXUS Initiative, in 2007—since then, NEXUS has made great opera accessible to more than 250,000 people. HGO is honored to count Schlumberger among its most dedicated corporate supporters.

Fred Dyen, Cameron Group HR director, serves on the HGO Board of Directors.

Dian and Harlan Stai

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

Tenenbaum Classic Jewelers

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

John G. Turner & Jerry G. Fischer

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

Vinson & Elkins LLP

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

Margaret Alkek Williams

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

The Wortham Foundation, Inc.

In the 1980s, the Wortham Foundation contributed $20 million to lead the capital campaign for the Wortham Theater Center, guided by businessman Gus S. Wortham’s early recognition of the vital role of the arts in making Houston an appealing place to live and work. During their lifetimes, Gus and his wife, Lyndall, were dedicated to improving the lives of Houstonians. The Foundation continues to support the Opera through the Wortham Foundation Permanent Endowment and generous annual operating support. This leadership support has been vital to HGO’s growth and commitment to excellence.
Members of Houston Grand Opera’s Patrons Society support the opera at a level of $4,000 or more, thereby making possible the incredible work of HGO. Members of the Society are entitled to many benefits at the opera, including complimentary valet parking, Masterson Green Room privileges during performance intermissions, personalized ticket service, two tickets to all open dress rehearsals, Opera Guild membership, a discount on Opera Guild Boutique purchases, and more. HGO gratefully recognizes our Patrons Society members. For information on joining the Patrons Society, please call Jennifer Wijangco at 713-546-0704.
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ARIA AND RECITATIVE
Think of *aria* and *recitative* in terms of musical theater: arias are analogous to the “big numbers” and recitative is similar to the dialogue that moves the action along. One big difference is that in musical theater, dialogue is usually spoken (exceptions include *Les Misérables*, which is completely sung). In opera, recitative is almost always sung, but there are exceptions (think Mozart’s *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, *The Magic Flute*, etc.). In a nutshell, an aria is a constructed song for solo voice. It often slows the action while the character reveals his or her feelings or state of mind. Recitative provides narrative and advances the plot.

The distinction between arias and recitative is easiest to discern in early operas. During the 19th century, Verdi began to blur the lines between the two so that it was hard to see where an aria ended and the recitative began. By the time of his later operas, Richard Wagner had dispensed with any division between the two in an effort to make the music seamless.

BRAVO
At the end of an opera or even a beautifully sung aria, you’ll often hear people shouting “Bravo!” to show their approval. “Brava!” is intended specifically to praise a female singer and “Bravi!” is for more than one singer. Feel free to join in!

CHORUS MASTER AND CONCERTMASTER
The chorus master is the person who directs and prepares an opera chorus. That means the concertmaster is the person who directs and prepares the concert. Right?

Wrong. The concertmaster is the leader of the first violin section—in the case of the HGO Orchestra, that’s Denise Tarrant. The concertmaster is “second in command” of the orchestra, after the conductor. Duties include making technical musical decisions for the violins, leading the orchestra in tuning, playing any solo violin parts, and serving as the liaison between the players and the conductor. This is particularly important since an orchestra typically plays under several different conductors in a season.

MAESTRO
Maestro is a title of respect meaning “master” or “teacher.” In classical music, it nearly always refers to the conductor.

The feminine form of maestro is *maestra*—but this word should not be used for female conductors, according to Dr. Corradina Caporello, a well-known Italian language teacher and vocal coach. “In Italy, the female conductor is always addressed as Maestro. The feminine indicates an elementary school teacher, and is…totally inappropriate [for a conductor].”

REPERTOIRE AND REPERTORY
Repertoire refers to the body of work a person is prepared to perform (Christine Goerke’s repertoire) or the body of work available for performance (the operatic repertoire). Repertory—surprise!—means the same thing, and the two words are often used interchangeably.

However, repertory has some additional definitions, including the one we use most: to refer to the practice of presenting alternating performances of two or more works. That’s what we do every fall, winter, and spring.

SUPERTITLES
Supertitles are the translations projected above the stage. HGO began using them in all non-English operas in 1984, becoming one of the first opera companies to do so. HGO later began titling even operas in English, because sung words, even in one’s native language, can still be hard to understand.

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CALENDAR 2017-18

SEPTEMBER
10 & 12

Studio Showcase: The singers and pianists of the HGO Studio perform a program of opera scenes, Wortham Center’s Cullen Theater, at 2:30 p.m. (September 10) and 8 p.m. (September 12). Free to season subscribers; nonsubscribers may purchase tickets at HGO.org.

30

Fall Awards Lunch: the HGO Guild honors stellar volunteers and supporters at the Omni Houston Hotel, 4 Riverway, 11:30 a.m. For information, contact the Guild at 713-546-0269 or guild@hgo.org.

OCTOBER
2–4

Hansel and Gretel: HGOco and opera to Go! present a short, family-friendly version of Humperdinck’s Hansel and Gretel with libretto by Kate Pogue at Miller Outdoor Theatre, 11 a.m. daily. Free. Hansel and Gretel tours from September 18 through December 15. To book a performance, visit HGO.org/OperaToGo or call 713-546-0231.

4

Opera Night Live: the HGO Guild invites you to the Wortham Theater Center to enjoy wine and snacks and learn more about La traviata from a special guest. 6:30 p.m. For information, contact the Guild at 713-546-0269 or guild@hgo.org.

17

HGOco invites lifelong learners to attend an Opera Up Close exploration of Verdi’s La traviata. The $25 ticket includes dinner and a workshop (5:30 p.m.) and a ticket to the dress rehearsal (7:30 p.m.). Visit HGO.org/community-programs.

20, 22m, 28, Nov. 1, 3, 5m, 11

Performances of Verdi’s La traviata. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the October 20 performance only.

20

Opening Night Dinner: HGO celebrates the opening of the 2017–18 season following the performance of La traviata. Wortham Theater Center, Ray C. Fish Plaza. For more information, contact Brooke Rogers at 713-546-0271 or brogers@hgo.org.

22

Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about La traviata immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

25

HGOco invites lifelong learners to attend an Opera Up Close exploration of Handel’s Julius Caesar. The $25 ticket includes dinner and a workshop (5:30 p.m.) and a ticket to the dress rehearsal (7:30 p.m.). Visit HGO.org/community-programs.

27, 29m, Nov. 4, 8, 10

Performances of Handel’s Julius Caesar. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the October 27 performance only.

29

Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about Julius Caesar immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

NOVEMBER
6 & 9

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

7

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

16 & 19

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

22

Holiday Tree Lighting at the Wortham Theater Center, noon.

30, Dec. 2, 3m, 6, 8, 10m, 14, 16m, 17m

World premiere performances of Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek’s The House without a Christmas Tree. Wortham Theater Center’s Cullen Theater.

DECEMBER
3

Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about The House without a Christmas Tree immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

5, 12, 13

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

JANUARY
10

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

16

HGOco invites lifelong learners to attend an Opera Up Close exploration of R. Strauss’s Elektra. The $25 ticket includes dinner and a workshop (5:30 p.m.) and a ticket to the dress rehearsal (7:30 p.m.). Visit HGO.org/community-programs.

19, 21m, 27, 31, Feb. 2

Performances of R. Strauss’s Elektra. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater.

21

Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about Elektra immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.
26, 28m, Feb. 3, 8, 10
Performances of Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the January 26 performance only.

28

*Behind the Music*: an intimate conversation about *The Barber of Seville* immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

**FEBRUARY**

1

*Concert of Arias*: the 30th Annual Eleanor McCallum Competition for Young Singers. Wortham Center’s Cullen Theater. Champagne reception at 6 p.m., competition at 7 p.m. Celebration Dinner to follow in the Grand Foyer. For information, contact Brooke Rogers at 713-546-0271 or brogers@hgo.org.

2 & 3

HGOco and Opera to Go! present the world premiere of Kamala Sankaram and David Johnston’s *Monkey & Francine in the City of Tigers*. Heinen Theatre at Houston Community College, central campus, 9:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. daily. *Monkey & Francine* tours from Jan. 29 through May 18. Book a performance at HGO.org/OperaToGo or by calling 713-546-0231.

23 & 24

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

**MARCH**

12–16

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

24

*Spring Event*: the HGO Guild holds its annual fundraiser at the Houston Racquet Club, 10709 Memorial Dr. 6:30 p.m. For information, contact the Guild at 713-546-0269 or guild@hgo.org.

**APRIL**

4

*Opera Night Live*: the HGO Guild invites you to the Wortham Theater Center to enjoy wine and snacks and learn more about *West Side Story* from a special guest. 6:30 p.m. For information, contact the Guild at 713-546-0269 or guild@hgo.org.

14

*Opera Ball 2018*: Grand Foyer of the Wortham Theater Center, 7 p.m. Followed by the *Encore Party*. For information, contact Brooke Rogers at 713-546-0271 or brogers@hgo.org.

20, 22m, 28m, 28, May 1, 3, 4, 6m

Performances of Bernstein’s *West Side Story*. Wortham Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the April 20 performance only.

22

*Behind the Music*: an intimate conversation about *West Side Story* immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

24

HGOco invites lifelong learners to attend an *Opera Up Close* exploration of Bellini’s *Norma*. The $25 ticket includes dinner and a workshop (5:30 p.m.) and a ticket to the dress rehearsal (7:30 p.m.). Visit HGO.org/community-programs.

27, 29m, May 5, 8, 11

Performances of Bellini’s *Norma*. Wortham Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the April 27 performance only.

29

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

**MAY**

10 & 13

*HGO Studio Recital Series*: Artists of the HGO Studio perform in the intimate and elegant salon at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 1406 Kirby Drive. May 10 at 7:30 p.m. and May 13 at 5 p.m.

20

HGOco presents the Bauer Family High School Voice Studio Graduation Recital, Duncan Recital Hall, Rice University. Free.

30

*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**

4–22

HGOco presents a range of Opera Camps geared for students of various ages and interests. Camps are held at the Wortham Theater Center. Registration begins January 15.

55

*HGO Guild Volunteer Gathering*: Find out how you can use your talents to help HGO through volunteering with the Guild. United Way of Greater Houston, 50 Waugh Dr., 6:30 p.m. For information, contact the Guild at 713-546-0269 or guild@hgo.org.

**2017–18 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS**

All meetings will take place in the third floor rehearsal room at the Wortham Theater Center.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 5, 2017</td>
<td>9 a.m.–noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 7, 2017</td>
<td>9 a.m.–noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 1, 2018</td>
<td>9 a.m.–noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 17, 2018</td>
<td>9 a.m.–noon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRUSTEES MEETINGS**

Trustees meetings will be held at the Wortham Theater Center.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 28, 2017</td>
<td>5–7 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 12, 2018</td>
<td>5–7 p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA OFFERS a wealth of services to enhance your opera experience.

Want to brush up on the opera before you attend? Need directions to the theater? This information and much more is available on our website where you can also purchase tickets and make a donation: HGO.org

HGO’s Customer Care Center is another great resource. For performance information, to purchase or exchange tickets, or to make a donation to HGO, contact the Customer Care Center at 713-228-OPERA (6737) or 800-62-OPERA (800-626-7372). You can also e-mail customercare@hgo.org. 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.

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

EXCHANGING YOUR TICKETS Full-season and 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.

LOST OR MISPLACED TICKETS There is no charge for replacing lost tickets. Call the Customer Care Center at 713-228-OPERA (6737) or 800-62-OPERA (800-626-7372) to request replacement tickets. They will be reprinted and held at the Will Call window for your performance.

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

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

FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICES Pre-order beverages for intermission at any of the lobby bars when you arrive at the theater. When you return at intermission, your beverages will be waiting for you.

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

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

If you have a state-issued disability permit and need valet parking, you may purchase special passes by contacting the Customer Care Center. Parking spots for disabled ticket holders are also available in the Theater District Garage on a first-come, first-served basis.

Parking in the Theater District Parking Garage is $12 on weekends and after 5 p.m. on weekdays. Clearance for trucks and vans is 6’8”. The tunnel connecting the garage to the Wortham Theater Center is on the Green 2 level of the garage.

The recommended entrances for the Theater District Garage are on Prairie or Texas between Bagby and Smith. The recommended entrances for the Alley Theatre Garage are on Smith or Louisiana between Texas and Prairie.
**DIRECTIONS**

**VIA I-10**

*Traveling East*
Smith exit
RIGHT on Prairie Street
LEFT into Theater District garage, entrance #8

*Traveling West*
San Jacinto / Main exit
LEFT on San Jacinto Street
RIGHT on Prairie Street
LEFT into Theater District garage, entrance #8

**VIA US-59**

*Traveling North*
Take Louisiana / Brazos exit; follow Louisiana Street
LEFT on Prairie Street
LEFT into Theater District Garage, entrance #8

*Traveling South*
Take I-10 West to the San Jacinto / Main exit (see I-10 directions)

**VIA 290**
Take 290 inbound to I-10 East (see I-10 directions)

**VIA I-45**

*Traveling North*
Houston Avenue / Memorial Drive exit
RIGHT on Memorial Drive feeder; cross Bagby Street
LEFT into Theater District garage, entrance #1

*Traveling South*
Take the I-10 split (to Beaumont), bear LEFT; Exit Milam Street
RIGHT on Prairie Street
LEFT into Theater District garage, entrance #8

**VIA 225**
Loop 610 West to I-45 North (see I-45 directions)

**VIA MEMORIAL DRIVE**
Memorial turns into Texas Avenue
LEFT into Theater District garage, entrance #6

**VIA ALLEN PARKWAY**
Parkway turns into Dallas Street
LEFT on Bagby Street
RIGHT on Rusk Street
LEFT into Theater District garage, entrance #1

**VIA 288**
Take I-45 North (see I-45 directions)

**OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

Out of consideration for other patrons and for the performers, late arrivals may be asked to leave the performance by house management or HGO staff.

Cameras, recording devices, cellular telephones, pagers, beeping watches, and recording devices may not be used during the performance inside the hall. Cameras and recording devices may be confiscated by an usher or HGO staff member.

Complimentary cough suppressants are available at Houston Grand Opera performances. Visit the Customer Care booth in the Grand Foyer.

Food and beverages are allowed in the lobby area only. Bottled water may be taken into the theater.

Smoking is prohibited in the Wortham Theater Center.

For your safety inside the auditorium, please remain seated until the house lights are turned on.

In case of illness during a performance, ask an usher to contact the EMT on call.

**EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

Backstage Security at the Wortham Theater Center: 832-487-7033

Wortham Theater Center lost-and-found: 832-487-7004
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Karen Reeves, Juvenile Chorus Director *

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Kristen E. Burke, Production Stage Manager
Michael Clark, Lighting Supervisor
Andrew Cloud, Properties Associate *
Norma Cortez, Head of Costumes *
Esmeralda De Leon, Costume Coordinator
Meg Edwards, Assistant Stage Manager *
Joseph Farley, Assistant Technical Director / HGOco Technical Director
Vince Ferraro, Master Electrician
Becky Fryberger, Assistant Stage Manager
Paul Gibson, Assistant Master Electrician / Lighting Board Programmer
Andreas Hager, Assistant Director
Ed Hamala, Assistant Carpenter, Head Flyman
Eduardo Hawkins, Head Soundman *
John Howard, Assistant Head of Properties
Clair Hummel, Costume Coordinator
Zach Jenkins, Assistant Stage Manager
Nara Lesser, Costume Technician
Rachel Lucas, Assistant Stage Manager
Judy Malone-Stein, Wardrobe Coordinator
Whitney McAnally, Assistant Stage Manager
Melissa McClung, Technical and Production Administrator
Megan, Properties Design Director *
Mercedes Ramirez, Draper *
Omer Ben Seadia, Assistant Director
Paul Spittle, Technical and Safety Director
Dotti Staker, Wig and Makeup Department Head *
Christopher Staub, Stage Manager/Assistant Stage Manager
Phillip Taylor, Technical Assistant/Driver
Paulya Lea Tran, Costume Technician
Taylor Twohy, Assistant to the Producing Director
Myrna Vallejo, Costume Shop Supervisor *
Sean Waldron, Head of Properties
Annie Wheeler, Stage Manager/Assistant Stage Manager
Miranda Wilson, Assistant Stage Manager
Richard Worley, Head Carpenter
Mo Zhou, Assistant Director

* denotes 10 or more years of service
OPENING NIGHT DINNER CELEBRATION
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2017
7:00 P.M.

CHAIRMEN  Kristina and Paul Somerville

7:00 P.M.  Verdi’s La traviata

Post-performance Celebration Dinner
The Ballroom at Bayou Place
Black Tie

CONCERT OF ARIAS
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2018
6:00 P.M.

CHAIRMEN  Rini and Edward Ziegler

6:00 P.M.  Champagne Reception
7:00 P.M.  Vocal Competition

Post-performance Celebration Dinner
in the Grand Foyer
Wortham Theater Center
Black Tie

OPERA BALL
SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 2018
7:00 P.M.

CHAIRMEN  Elizabeth Grimm and Jack Roth

Wortham Theater Center
White Tie
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