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Welcome to the Wortham Theater Center.

This winter, we pair Mozart’s sparkling *Marriage of Figaro* with Dvořák’s lush and haunting *Rusalka*—music just doesn’t get more beautiful than this. Both operas are in the hands of the acclaimed Harry Bicket, whom we welcome in his much-anticipated HGO debut. Simultaneously the artistic director of the renowned period orchestra The English Concert and the chief conductor of the Santa Fe Opera, and a sought-after guest conductor all over the world, Maestro Bicket is one of the conductors we most admire for the clarity of sound he evokes from his players and his gift for collaborating with singers.

For *The Marriage of Figaro*, we have an exceptional young ensemble cast led by bass-baritone Adam Plachetka in his HGO debut as Figaro and staged by Ian Rutherford. While the handsome Göran Järvefelt production of this ever-popular opera served HGO well for nearly three decades, it is now officially retired. The one we now present comes from the brilliant minds of director Michael Grandage and designer Christopher Oram—the director-designer team behind our recent *Madame Butterfly*. They hit upon the idea of setting the production in early-1970s Morocco, a relatively contemporary setting that shared the same cultural influences as Mozart’s Vienna. The production is not only stunning, but even more importantly, it perfectly captures the playful spirit of the opera, as well as its poignance.

Ana María Martínez has been universally acclaimed for the title role in *Rusalka* ever since she first gave her heart-wrenching portrayal at Glyndebourne in 2009. She has since sung Rusalka with other companies—always to rave reviews—but we are thrilled to showcase her in that Glyndebourne production by Melly Still that was made especially for her. We welcome revival director Donna Stirrup, Brian Jagde as the Prince, and Maida Hundeling as the Foreign Princess, all in their HGO debuts, and HGO Studio alumni Richard Paul Fink and Jill Grove as Rusalka’s father, Vodník, and the witch, Ježibaba, respectively.

We hope you will make plans now to attend the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s *Prince of Players*, March 5–13. Carlisle is one of the most important voices in American opera, and HGO has enjoyed an extraordinary and unique relationship with him—the longest ongoing relationship of any composer with an organization. Among the ways he helped shape the company during the many years he spent in Houston, he co-founded the HGO Studio and heard every Studio audition. *Prince of Players* will be the fifth Floyd world premiere we have been privileged to stage here at HGO, and we hope you will not want to miss it.

Thank you for being with us; please enjoy the performance.

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EMELINE TAKES WING

This spring, Song of Houston draws inspiration from Houston history with the world premiere of Wings They Were: The Case of Emeline, a 45-minute chamber opera created by Houston composer John L. Cornelius II and librettist Janine Joseph. Based on an amazing story about courage and justice discovered in the Harris County archives, the opera centers on Emeline, a free biracial woman in 1840s Houston who, with the help of a young lawyer, sued the man who was holding her and her two children as slaves and won her case, thereby securing their freedom. This commission was sponsored by Baker Botts—the firm that the young lawyer, Peter Gray, eventually founded—in celebration of its 150th anniversary. Wings They Were: The Case of Emeline will tour to middle and high schools and community centers from April 29 to May 6, along with three special evening performances in the 1910 Courthouse organized by Baker Botts and the Houston Bar Association. Judge Mark Davidson, who unearthed the case files in a warehouse in the early 2000s, Bill Kroger and Richard Husseini of Baker Botts, and other legal and historical experts have served as consultants to the creative team throughout the development of the opera. We look forward to bringing Emeline’s inspiring story to life for Houston audiences of all ages.

HGO’S PATRICK SUMMERS RECEIVES SAN FRANCISCO OPERA’S TOP HONOR

HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers returned to San Francisco Opera this past fall as he often does in his capacity as principal guest conductor—this time to conduct Sondheim’s Sweeney Todd.

But on this occasion, at the conclusion of his last performance in the run, the company where he began his career honored him with the San Francisco Opera Medal. “The San Francisco Opera Medal is the highest honor that this company awards to an artistic professional, and it would be hard for me to think of anyone more deserving than Patrick Summers,” said San Francisco Opera General Director David Gockley. “San Francisco Opera has always been a welcoming and special theater for him.”

“My life has been intricately woven with memories of San Francisco Opera,” says Summers, “from attending Tosca with Dorothy Kirsten and Plácido Domingo, conducted by James Levine, when I was seven, to the thrill of being accepted to the Merola Opera Program in 1986, to my own debut with the company in 1990, and the joyous range of repertoire I’ve been privileged to conduct there ever since. San Francisco has been my artistic nodal point, the compass by which I have found my way on so many other journeys. I am profoundly grateful to my dear mentor David Gockley for this rare honor.”

Summers served as director of San Francisco Opera’s touring program Western Opera Theater and, later, as music director of the San Francisco Opera Center, which oversees all of the company’s training programs. Gockley, during his long tenure as general director at HGO, brought Summers to HGO in 1998 as music director. The Opera Medal dates back to 1970 and previous honorees include such singers as Leontyne Price, Joan Sutherland, Frederica von Stade, Plácido Domingo, and Thomas Stewart, and conductor Charles Mackerras, one of Maestro Summers’s mentors.
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In Memoriam

Donna Bruni

HGO lost a dear and loyal friend when Donna Bruni passed away December 22, 2015. An active board member since 1998, Donna chaired HGO’s Special Events Committee from 2010 to 2015.

Donna and her husband Robert’s wide-ranging efforts have benefited almost every area of the company. They supported CD releases of HGO productions; commissioned two new operas for Opera to Go!; sponsored HGO Studio artists; and supported many special events including recitals, fashion shows, the Opera Ball (which Donna chaired in 2009), and Concert of Arias, which they chaired during its 25th season. In 2010 and again in 2013, Donna conducted the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra in performing The Star Spangled Banner on opening night.

A woman of grace and elegance who especially loved white roses and orchids, Donna had a special knack for putting on fabulous events. “She was a staunch believer that events need to be fun, with great entertainment,” recalls HGO’s director of special events, Scott Ipsen. And she worked hard to add special touches. As chairman of the Opera Ball, Donna extended the French theme to include a line of French poodles waiting to greet guests. Her own beloved poodle, Pooka, was her inspiration.

Residents of San Antonio and Santa Fe as well as Houston, the Brunis hosted annual recitals for Studio artists at their San Antonio home. They remained close to the artists they sponsored, including Norman Reinhardt, who sang Lensky in HGO’s Eugene Onegin last fall. “Donna so wanted to hear Norman’s aria,” recalled Diane Zola, HGO Director of Artistic Administration and a close friend. “And she was very excited about Rusalka. She took a real interest in Eastern Europe.”

Donna also served on the board of the Santa Fe Opera and was a member of the founding board of the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market. A painter and photographer who had several shows in San Antonio, she was also a history buff, a voracious reader, and “a friend par excellence,” noted Gloria Portela, another close friend and colleague on HGO’s board of directors.

Donna served on the board of Brilliant Lectures, and she and Robert were honorary chairs of the 2012 Celebrity Paws Gala for Citizens for Animal Protection. They also co-chaired the inaugural UNICEF Audrey Hepburn Society Ball in 2013.

Above all Donna was devoted to her family, especially her son, Joseph, and granddaughter, Charlotte. “She exuded joy at grandmotherhood,” recalled Portela.

We extend our deepest sympathies to Robert and the family, and to all who were fortunate enough to call Donna a friend. She was certainly a friend and a passionate lover of HGO, who will be greatly missed.
Dear Opera Patron:

On behalf of Houston Methodist, welcome to Houston Grand Opera for Mozart’s comic masterpiece *The Marriage of Figaro*. We can vouch that this evening of beautiful music, glorious singing, laughter, wit, and humanity will benefit your overall wellbeing!

In fact, we believe that a city’s cultural health is just as important as physical health. We are immensely proud to be the official health care provider to HGO, providing not just underwriting support for the main-stage opera season, but vital medical care for the artists and staff who bring these world-class opera performances to life.

Houston Methodist strives to provide high quality health care in a spiritual environment of caring to all patients. Our system includes seven hospitals in the Houston area, with our eighth hospital serving The Woodlands scheduled to open in 2017. Houston Methodist Hospital, our flagship hospital in the Texas Medical Center, is ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as the No. 1 hospital in Texas. Through our Center for Performing Arts Medicine (CPAM), Houston Methodist provides amateur and professional artists with access to more than 100 elite physicians committed to treating the specific needs of performing artists.

Thank you for your support of HGO. Enjoy the performance!

Sincerely,

Marc L. Boom, M.D.
President
Chief Executive Officer
Houston Methodist
Dear Opera Patron:

Welcome to Houston Grand Opera’s performance of Dvořák’s Rusalka. Vinson & Elkins LLP is thrilled to support this imaginative folk tale of mermaids, mortals, and witches set to glorious music and starring a Houston favorite, soprano Ana María Martínez, in one of her signature roles.

Vinson & Elkins is an international law firm with approximately 650 lawyers across 15 offices worldwide. Our lawyers and staff truly believe in the value of giving back to the communities we serve, and we are especially proud of our tradition of supporting the arts here in our hometown of Houston and across the globe.

From pro bono legal services, board service, and event hosting, to production underwriting, we could not be more appreciative of our longstanding partnership with HGO. Thank you for attending HGO, and we hope you enjoy this performance of Rusalka.

Sincerely,

Scott N. Wulfe
Managing Partner
We’ve all heard it—opera audiences are “aging.” A majority of operagoers are middle-aged and above because young people in their 20s, 30s, and 40s are too busy with kids and careers to care about coming to the opera. Besides, they watch everything on the Internet anyway. Pretty soon there won’t be anyone coming to HGO or supporting the company and they’ll have to turn the Wortham into a 3-D movie theater…wrong!

Enter HGO’s Young Patrons Circle (known as YPC), the next generation of HGO’s attendees and lead supporters. YPC is a set of over 100 young, energetic, and philanthropically minded arts supporters who come together to support and celebrate great opera. Their shared passion for HGO and for making Houston a vibrant city in which to live and work makes this tight-knit group one of HGO’s secret weapons against the perception of dwindling opera audiences.

First off, opera audiences are younger than you may think. According to the most recent audience survey from National Endowment for the Arts, 38.8 percent of adult opera attendees are between the ages of 18 and 44. At HGO, 22.5 percent of our subscribers and over 30 percent of single ticket buyers are under 45. And this number is on the rise.

HGO’s O.N.—Opening Night for Young Professionals subscription series has nearly 500 members who attend the opera together and connect at social events outside of performances. Thanks to the energy and commitment of these subscribers younger than 45, about a quarter of the Brown Theater is filled with young, energetic opera-goers on every opening night.

YPC members are a special subset of our Young Professional subscribers who make minimum household annual contributions of $2,000 to HGO, or half the annual contribution level of our regular Patrons Circle. YPC members receive exclusive benefits such as valet parking; access to the Green Room and Founders Salon; discounts on tickets to HGO fundraising galas like the Opera Ball; invitations to private events, recitals, and gatherings; and, above all, the chance to build long-lasting relationships with fellow opera lovers.

YPC is especially wonderful for people who are new to Houston or who are trying to connect socially or professionally. In fact, some members bravely join without any prior knowledge of opera! They simply desire to connect with a strong, diverse network of young professionals and philanthropists, and decide to give the art form a try. Ten times out of ten they get hooked.

The generous spirit of our Young Patrons is a vital part of HGO’s success. In addition to making annual financial contributions, Young Patrons attend our main-stage productions, community programs, and special events, host events of their own, and actively help us recruit more young people into the HGO family to sustain the future of the company. They even introduce their children to HGO!

Carrie Brandsberg-Dahl and her husband, Sverre, began attending performances in the 2004–05 season and became YPC members in 2011. Carrie shares, “Sverre and I are passionate about supporting the opera. It has been a big part of Sverre’s life since childhood and we both love it. Being part of HGO has introduced us to some of our closest friends through the YPC group. YPC is more than a community; it has become part of our family. I look forward to our kids enjoying and appreciating the arts.
that we are lucky to be a part of here in Houston and at HGO."

There are countless ways for YPC members to connect to the art form and to one another. Recent events include the fall YPC Kick-off and recital hosted by the Brandsberg-Dahls in their home and a private Founders Salon Dinner before the opening of The Marriage of Figaro. In March 2016, BB&T and Fleming’s will host a special evening bringing together the young artists of the HGO Studio and YPC members, and in May, YPC members will be included in an annual O.N.—Opening Night for You Young Professionals tradition: “Picnic on the Hill” on the opening night of HGO’s free family Miller Outdoor Theatre performances. And for each “formal” event, there’s an informal gathering or after-party of YPC members at a favorite Montrose taco joint or beloved wine bar.

Our YPC members grow into some of our company’s most devoted advocates, such as HGO Trustee Gabriel Loperena. A longtime member of our HGO family, Gabriel and his wife, Sara, began attending performances before joining the Young Patrons Circle. This past season, Gabriel joined as a Young Trustee, another set of young leaders who participate at the trustee level and make annual contributions of $5,000 or more. "Sara and I are firm believers that art is a conversation, not just with a work, but about a work. Our involvement with YPC and the Young Trustees was born out of a deep desire to share our love for opera, and our own personal conversation with the art form, with fascinating and passionate individuals who share our commitment to this very special artistic expression. YPC and Young Trustees have enriched our lives personally and have transformed our relationship with opera in profound and wonderful ways. We are immeasurably grateful to the company for that."

Our YPC members bring a joy and energy to our company that is unparalleled. At a mere 60 years old, HGO is one of the youngest and most innovative opera companies in the world, and we count on our young supporters and YPC members to always keep us young at heart.

To join the fun, please contact Development Officer Patrick Mühlen-Schulte at 713-546-0235 or pmuhlen@hgo.org.
The Spirit
of
This Place

Mozart’s
Le nozze di Figaro / The Marriage of Figaro
That overused word genius is not the fixed image we often seek; it is a kaleidoscope. The extraordinary gifts of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91) continue to mystify and inspire because he exemplifies a uniquely complex idea of what it means to be a genius. A few curmudgeons don’t find his music dramatic enough to be interesting, but they are shouted down by the cries of near-universal acclaim that echo through the centuries. For some, Mozart is music’s great philosopher, or even spiritual enlightenment itself; to others he is earthly proof of a deity. To another group he is a visionary miscreant, a bawdy and brilliant savant. Unique among composers, he is all of the above and much more, and he satisfies the intellect while piercing the heart.

Unlike most composers, who excelled in one genre over another, Mozart mastered every type of music he composed. His piano concertos remain the pinnacles of the repertoire, even if those composed a century or more later by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, and Prokofiev are flashier and more readily win prestigious competitions. Name any musical form—symphonies; string quartets and quintets; piano trios; concertos for violin, horn, and all the woodwind instruments; sonatas for many instruments; masses; dances; and many others—he wrote brilliantly in all genres. But once smitten with the stage, Mozart became obsessed with opera. What is now considered the first opera of his maturity, Idomeneo (1781), was the work of a seasoned opera composer—it was already the twelfth opera from the 25-year-old Mozart. The operas that consumed the remainder of Mozart’s brief life are unprecedented in the depth of understanding they display about love, loss, and humor. Each of the major works he composed during this time—The Abduction from the Seraglio (1782), The Marriage of Figaro (1786), Don Giovanni (1787), Cosi fan tutte (1790),
and The Magic Flute and La clemenza di Tito (both 1791)—is filled with moments of enlightened transcendence, an enriching beauty unique to Mozart’s operas, with the most poignant being the breath-stopping few moments of unutterable joy and forgiveness that conclude The Marriage of Figaro.

In his 1979 play and 1984 film Amadeus, Peter Shaffer created a memorable portrait of Mozart that endures today. In Shaffer’s marvelous play, Antonio Salieri, who was Mozart’s rival for the attention and support of Emperor Joseph II, is painted as a man frustrated by his own mediocrity, vowing revenge on a God who would so capriciously bestow musical gifts on such an immoral child as little Wolfgang, while he had lived a virtuous life in service of music. In one scene, Shaffer’s Salieri, reading through then-unheard Mozart manuscripts, brings them to sonic life in his imagination and is struck with a realization:

They showed no corrections of any kind. It was puzzling—then suddenly alarming. What was evident is that Mozart was transcribing music completely finished in his head. And finished as most music is never finished. Displace one note and there would be diminishment. Displace one phrase and the structure would fall...I was staring through the cage of those meticulous ink strokes at an Absolute Beauty.

Though the action of Amadeus is fictional—for Mozart wasn’t poisoned and Salieri did not help him write the Requiem, nor was Salieri less than supportive of his brilliant colleague—Shaffer’s story carries an emotional truth about Mozart’s music that makes it one of history’s most important works about creativity.

It took a trio of geniuses from three nations and diverse backgrounds to bring the characters of Le nozze di Figaro—The Marriage of Figaro—to life. Before Mozart could ignite them with his indelible music, Pierre-Augustine Caron de Beaumarchais (1732–99) created them and Lorenzo da Ponte (1749–1838) adapted them into an operatic scenario for Mozart. All three men had roving eyes to varying degrees, so much so that it is a miracle they created one of the great works of art about constancy.

In addition to a busy and productive writing career, Beaumarchais pursued female flesh across Europe with such astonishing zeal that one wonders how he ever wrote anything. Yet he found time to support both the American War of Independence and to play a role in the early days of the French Revolution, not the least of which was writing three French plays that follow the Almaviva family through generations, Le barbier de Séville (The Barber of Seville, 1775), Le mariage de Figaro (The Marriage of Figaro, 1784), and La mère coupable (The Guilty Mother, 1792). Because a small moment
As fascinating as Da Ponte and Beaumarchais are, it is Mozart who has kept *The Marriage of Figaro* alive through the centuries. This is a score fueled with the most elemental of human characteristics: curiosity and humor. Mozart takes small musical themes and youthfully plays with them as though they are a puzzle to be solved, or he a tour-guide to their impulses. The opera's familiar overture, for example, develops out of a comically simple five-note flourish, sparking the light-hearted emotional complexity of an opera whose title most musicians utter with affection and reverence. Its humor, both visual and musical, is the humor of youth: disguises and tricks to the eye and ear. We hear Figaro's excited measurements of his marriage bed in the ever-larger intervals of his counting. We hear the joy of the young lovers singing in duet, something we never hear from the estranged Count and Countess. We hear the cynical orchestral imitation of a guitar in Figaro's first aria, in which he refers to his employer as *Contino*, an insulting diminutive of Count. We hear the martial bravado of Cherubino's impending military life. We hear the pain of the Countess wondering what happened to her youthful love. We hear every possible human emotion in *The Marriage of Figaro*, all with a musical freshness that erases the barrier of the centuries.

The two arias of the page Cherubino are both characterized by a then-new instrument Mozart particularly loved, the clarinet. The instrument got its name from the Italian word for a small trumpet, the *clarino*, though the instrument itself descended from the *chalumeau*, a centuries-old instrument. The famous instrument maker Johann Christian Denner (1655–1707), is credited with not only improving the chalumeau but using...
it as the basis to invent the clarinet as a new instrument, around 1700. Mozart was the first major composer to write a concerto for the clarinet, and it is a particularly sublime work. *The Marriage of Figaro* marks the clarinet’s first major presence in opera.

Michael Grandage’s new production of this perennial favorite, produced jointly between the Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Houston Grand Opera, arose from a unique inspiration. Searching for contemporary relevance of this feudal story, his inventive mind asked the questions that must be asked of any *Figaro* production: “What is the opera about?” This is not, as is sometimes assumed, the same question as “When and where does the opera take place?” The action of Beaumarchais’s 1784 play, though set in what was then–contemporary Seville, was an allegory on all aristocratic societies—particularly, though not explicitly, the French. Delving into the world of Mozart’s Vienna, a polyglot and dizzyingly multicultural place, and one in which there was a clear demarcation between the moneyed and servant classes (important themes of this opera), Grandage searched to find a more contemporary setting that shared the qualities of all of these cultural influences.

His formidable imagination landed upon early-1970s Morocco, or perhaps a Moroccan/Moorish-inspired country estate in Spain. In this world we find a time close to our own in which all of the indelible qualities of this opera make perfect sense: youthful fun in gorgeous gardens, disguises, letters, and mind-altering substances, all a part of both Figaro’s plot and Mozart’s Vienna. The darker part of Beaumarchais’s play, the entitlement of a land-owning man to the use of his female servants, is not, sadly, unique to the 18th century, and this too, is covered in the diversity of the updated setting.

Perhaps *The Marriage of Figaro* has endured simply because its music is so beautiful and timeless. But there is another reason: it is a work of profound Enlightenment Era spirituality. In its perfectly ordered way, it teaches us something about how to live: forgiveness, love, compassion, and truth *matter*. Musical beauty caresses the sadness and ferocity we see all around us. Laughter is a balm. We all have an indelible memory (or fantasy) of a single day of youthful folly that continued into dusk, during which we experienced disguises, jokes, tears, pain, and a final laugh at it all by the time we slept. *The Marriage of Figaro* is that day, the spirit of our small place in the world, constantly renewed, recreated, and relived. © Glyndebourne Productions Ltd. Photos by Alastair Muir.
No genre has captured the world’s imagination as firmly and persistently as the fairy tale. Spanning centuries, continents, and cultures, the shared experience of telling short, familiar stories has existed for millennia. These tales, familiar either because they are passed down or resemble another story, are saturated with the accumulated wisdom of the past.
Fairy tales hold a unique space in the history of literature. Based in folklore, these fanciful stories imply an oral tradition of the people in the word itself. The English word folk descends from the German Volk, meaning people. The longevity of the genre lies in its acute ability to address fundamental human emotions, relationships, and needs while protected by the pretense of the stories.

It is difficult to identify the genesis of many fairy tales, and the history of the aqueous feminine Rusalka is no exception. Some of the earliest accounts of the mermaid archetype can be found in ancient Assyria, modern-day Egypt, and portions of the Middle East. Stories claim the goddess Atargatis transformed herself into a mermaid in shame after accidentally killing her lover. Japanese folklore produced the ningyo, whose appearance signaled terrible squalls and destruction. Fishermen threw them back when caught in their nets. It’s believed that many African civilizations had water spirit traditions well before their first contact with Europeans, of which Mami Wata was the most prevalent. She was said to lure men to her underwater realm; if she deemed them worthy of release, they returned with a new spiritual understanding of the world.


Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Homer’s *Odyssey* tell of sirens, beautiful yet dangerous female creatures that used their enchanting voices to lure sailors to shipwreck on their rocky island. Christopher Columbus was said to report seeing mermaids, which were probably manatees or dolphins—the biological order sirenia, which takes its name from siren, encompasses the great manatee.

Even more difficult is explaining the striking similarity of descriptions among regions that had no documented historical connections. What could account for such similar tales? Maria Tatar, author of *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, suggests, “Critics have argued that fairy tales translate the eternal truths of mental life into concrete actions and images. They may incarnate the highest hopes and the deepest fears of every childhood, or they may preserve the fantasies and phobias of an earlier age. … Fairy tales traffic in truths so fundamental to life and so universal in their application that they are necessarily alike everywhere.”
and eaten (Hansel and Gretel)—subject matter that didn’t seem to match the title *Children and Household Tales*. Later editions were severely edited to mitigate the violence and make them more suitable for young audiences.

Just as the Brothers Grimm presented their first collection in 1812, Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué published *Undine*, a landmark German novella that drew on the French myth of Melusine and the writings of the early 16th-century Renaissance man Paracelsus. It is in *Undine* that we first find direct source material for Jaroslav Kvapil’s *Rusalka* libretto. Fouqué’s story also inspired an opera from Tchaikovsky, although the composer destroyed it before it was produced.

Danish author Hans Christian Andersen is most often credited with the definitive mermaid story. *The Little Mermaid* of 1837 combined the myths of undines, nymphs, nixies, and selkies (seductive seals that turn into humans in Scottish folklore), into one iconic tale. While this was the source that underwent Disneyfication for the 1989 animated film, the story of a young mermaid who gives up her magical life for an unrequited love in the human realm harbors significantly more darkness and despair than Disney leads one to believe.

Disney did, however, include much of Andersen’s original story. The title mermaid dreams of walking on land and marrying the prince she has admired from the waters. Her father refers her to a sea witch who brews a potion to turn her into a human, but here is where

The image and tale of the mermaid that most North Americans identify came into focus in the early 19th century. The rapid industrialization of Europe prompted brothers Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm to begin the scholarly pursuit of compiling and preserving stories shared through the oral tradition. The result of the Grimm brothers’ work was an anthology of horrific tales that included young women cutting off their heels to fit into shoes (*Cinderella*) and children being fattened up to be baked
the story departs significantly. Andersen's mermaid longs not only for the prince, but also for an immortal soul that will live on after her physical death. As a mermaid she is expected to live three hundred years, after which she will dissolve into sea foam. To become human, she has to give up her voice by letting the sea witch cut out her tongue, and the entire deal is contingent upon her marrying the prince. If he marries another, she will die at the next sunrise. Her transformation will be excruciatingly painful, she is warned; it will feel as if she is being split in two and that with each step with her human legs she will feel as if she is being pierced with sharp knives.

Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* also features a heavy-handed Christian moral that departs noticeably from *Undine* and eventually, *Rusalka*. When the prince chooses an unnamed princess over the mermaid, her sisters offer her a knife to kill the prince, thereby preserving her own life. She refuses, preferring to sacrifice herself so he may continue to live. She then becomes a daughter of the air who will gain an immortal soul after three hundred years of service. Removed from the depths of the ocean, the air daughters float unseen into homes to observe children's behavior. For every good child they find, God shortens the sentence. With every naughty child an additional day is added. The invisible presence of the mermaid was meant to frighten children into good behavior; the idea that their behavior affected the mermaid's destiny was intended to encourage Christian values—aspects that Disney opted to omit.

Jaroslav Kvapil's libretto for *Rusalka* draws on aspects of both Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* and Fouqué's *Undine* while creating a uniquely Czech story. Kvapil found inspiration during a trip to Andersen's native Denmark, but wanted to write in the style of Karel Jaromír Erben, a prominent Czech poet of the 19th century. By the time Kvapil wrote the libretto, Erben's ballads were well known and treasured for their great literary value and compelling storytelling. Kvapil set off on an adaptation steeped in symbolism, impressionism, and psychological exploration.

The *Rusalka* story departs from both *The Little Mermaid* and *Undine*, allowing Kvapil to create a distinctly original and effusively Czech masterpiece. The title role is an unnamed *rusalka*, or water nymph, that lives in a lake. She longs to be human, experience human love, and gain an immortal soul. Kvapil draws a firm distinction between the ethereal world of acts one and three with the harsh reality of the human world in act two. Dvořák expands upon this by giving all characters except Rusalka dynamic dance rhythms in the second act, isolating her like a voiceless fish gasping for breath.

Her father is an archetype familiar to Czech audiences. The *vodník*, or water sprite, was immortalized by Erben's lyric
poem Vodník in 1883. Erben’s sprite was much more vengeful and violent, as exemplified in a particularly grim scene in which he throws the dismembered head of his baby against the house of the woman who deserted him. Kvapil’s Vodník is much more fatherly, in a traditional sense.

The iconic sea witch, or ježibaba, has no counterpart in Undine but is modeled after the notorious Baba Yaga. Both Andersen and Kvapil chose to include this character steeped in Slavic folklore, making it the notable 19th-century addition to the tale. A Baba Yaga is traditionally a ferocious-looking woman who dwells in the forest. She always exhibits striking ambiguity, making it unclear whether she offers assistance or destruction. She dutifully brews Rusalka’s requested potion under the conditions of sacrificing her voice and the attached consequences.

Kvapil, aided by Dvořák’s sublime melodies, dances, and orchestrations, created a fulcrum of the Czech operatic repertoire, at the time rivaled only by Smetana’s The Bartered Bride. While this may not be the Little Mermaid that first comes to mind, Rusalka is the culmination of thousands of years of myths, folklore, and fairy tales. It draws audiences into the depths of the feminine psyche as the innocent water sprite learns the difficult lesson that the seaweed isn’t always greener on the other side.
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA PRESENTS
THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

An Opera in Four Acts
Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte
Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center
Sung in Italian with English Projected Translations

CAST (IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE)

Figaro                Adam Plachetka *
Susanna               Heidi Stober ‡
Dr. Bartolo           Peixin Chen ‡
Marcellina            Catherine Cook
Cherubino             Lauren Snouffer ‡
Count Almaviva        Joshua Hopkins ‡
Don Basilio           Keith Jameson *
Countess Almaviva     Ailyn Pérez
Antonio               Federico De Michelis †
                      Beth Madison Fellow
Don Curzio            Chris Bozeka †
                      Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow
Barbarina             Pureum Jo †
                      Mr. Joseph Matulevich and Ms. Sasha Davis/Nancy and Ted Haywood Fellow
First Bridesmaid      Laurie Lester
Second Bridesmaid    Cecilia Duarte

A co-production of Houston Grand Opera and Glyndebourne Festival Opera.
Houston Methodist is the official health care provider for Houston Grand Opera.
United Airlines is the official airline of Houston Grand Opera.
Tenenbaum Classic Jewelers is the preferred jeweler of Houston Grand Opera.
The activities of Houston Grand Opera are supported in part by funds provided by the City of Houston and Theater District Improvement, Inc., and by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts.

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

Conductor: Harry Bicket *
Production: Michael Grandage
Revival Director: Ian Rutherford
Set and Costume Designer: Christopher Oram
Original Lighting Designer: Paule Constable
Associate Lighting Designer: Andrew May *
Movement Director: Ben Wright *
Chorus Master: Richard Bado ‡
The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair
Musical Preparation/
Fortepiano Continuo: Patrick Harvey ‡
Mr. and Mrs. James A. Elkins Endowed Chair
Musical Preparation: Emily Senturia ‡
Joan Hacken Bitar, M.D./Bill and Melinda Brunger Fellow
Kirill Kuzmin †
Lynn Guggolz/Ms. Marianne Kah Fellow
Geoffrey Loff †
Stage Manager: Christopher Staub
Assistant Director: Omer Ben Seadia
Supertitles by: Scott Heumann, adapted by Paul Hopper

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Supertitles cued by: Catherine Schaefer and Mary Box
Performing artists, stage directors, and choreographers are represented by the American Guild of Musical Artists, the union for opera professionals in the United States.

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

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

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

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

This production is being recorded for archival purposes.
SYNOPSIS  |  THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

THE PERFORMANCE LASTS APPROXIMATELY 3 HOURS AND 15 MINUTES INCLUDING ONE INTERMISSION.

PRELUDE
It is the early 1970s. Three years have passed since the events of The Barber of Seville, and Rosina is now the Countess Almaviva. Figaro has joined the household as Count Almaviva's valet, and Don Basilio has been awarded the post of music teacher. New acquaintances are Cherubino, the teenage son of a friend; Antonio, the gardener; his daughter, Barbarina; and Susanna, the Countess's maid, whom Figaro intends to marry today. However, Figaro has borrowed money from Marcellina (the ex-housekeeper of the house) and has promised to repay the loan within a certain time or marry her. The Count, in the meantime, has promised Susanna a handsome dowry, hoping she will give him the feudal lord's right to the first night. Figaro devises a fresh plot against the Count: Susanna is to agree to the rendezvous in the garden, but Cherubino will put on her clothes and go in her stead. To mislead the Count, Figaro smuggles him a love letter from Susanna, sealing it with a pin, which is to be returned as an answer. Cherubino jumps from the balcony to escape, but Antonio notices him. Figaro convinces the Count that it was he who jumped out the window. Marcellina, Doctor Bartolo, and Don Basilio enter and accuse Figaro of lying. Figaro's wedding is seriously threatened.

ACT I
Early in the morning, in a palace room next to the quarters of the Count and Countess, Figaro happily surveys the fine room and bed the Count has given him as a wedding present. Susanna, however, refuses to move in, revealing the Count's lecherous motives to her unsuspecting bridegroom. Figaro, seeing his master in a new light, begins to map out his revenge. Marcellina has brought Doctor Bartolo to the palace to enlist his aid in preventing the marriage. He leads them in praising the Count. The Count hopes that Marcellina will help in postponing the wedding. Finally, he sends Cherubino off to war in his regiment. However, Figaro has a bright idea. On the sly, he asks Cherubino to stay at the palace until evening.

ACT II
Meanwhile, in the Countess's boudoir, Susanna has just told the Countess about the preceding events. The Countess is very unhappy and longs to regain her husband's love. Figaro devises a fresh plot against the Count: Susanna is to agree to the rendezvous in the garden, but Cherubino will put on her clothes and go in her stead. To mislead the Count, Figaro smuggles him a letter, which hints that the Countess has a lover. As Cherubino is trying on the Countess's clothes, the jealous Count returns unexpectedly. Cherubino hides the Countess's dress, and the Count makes sure that the wedding occurs, she urgent Susanna to invite the Count to meet in the garden. The Countess will keep the assignation, wearing Susanna's dress, and surprise the unhappy Count. The Count, realizing that he is being mocked, plans to put an end to his servant's impudence and avenge himself by backing Marcellina's claim, forcing Figaro to either marry her or repay the loan. Once again, the Count's plans are frustrated: it turns out that Marcellina and Doctor Bartolo, although not married, are Figaro's parents. In addition, the Countess has given Susanna money to pay Figaro's debt. The Countess resolves to show up her husband and dictates a love letter from Susanna, sealing it with a pin, which is to be returned as an answer. Susanna has just told the Countess about the preceding events. The Count asks her to give secretly to Susanna. Figaro finds out about this and thinks Susanna is being unfaithful to him. In his jealousy, Figaro brings Doctor Bartolo and Don Basilio to the rendezvous to expose the Count and Susanna. The Countess changes clothes with Susanna, who decides to punish Figaro for his suspicions by remaining hidden but allowing him to overhear her joyfully anticipate her “tryst” with the Count. Looking for Barbarina, Cherubino enters and nearly ruins the Countess's plot. Figaro soon stumbles onto what is happening. Everyone now participates in the game of putting the Count in his place after he has tried to seduce his own wife disguised as Susanna. Before the “day of madness” is over, all is resolved and love is in the air.

INTERMISSION

ACT III
It is afternoon in the palace hall and the Countess decides to take action. To make sure that the wedding occurs, she urges Susanna to invite the Count to meet in the garden. The Countess will keep the assignation, wearing Susanna's dress, and surprise the unhappy Count. The Count, realizing that he is being mocked, plans to put an end to his servant's impudence and avenge himself by backing Marcellina's claim, forcing Figaro to either marry her or repay the loan. Once again, the Count's plans are frustrated: it turns out that Marcellina and Doctor Bartolo, although not married, are Figaro's parents. In addition, the Countess has given Susanna money to pay Figaro’s debt. The Countess resolves to show up her husband and dictates a love letter from Susanna, sealing it with a pin, which is to be returned as an answer. Cherubino, who has been hiding in the palace, turns up again among a bevy of his wits, has hidden. Figaro collects the servants to proceed with the wedding. He leads them in praising the Count for abolishing the droit du seigneur and asks the Count to place the white veil, a symbol of virtue, on Susanna's head. The Count refuses! The struggle has begun. The Count hopes that Marcellina will help in postponing the wedding. Finally, he sends Cherubino off to war in his regiment. However, Figaro has a bright idea. On the sly, he asks Cherubino to stay at the palace until evening.

ACT IV
That evening in the palace garden, Barbarina has lost the pin that the Count asked her to give secretly to Susanna. Figaro finds out about this and thinks Susanna is being unfaithful to him. In his jealousy, Figaro brings Doctor Bartolo and Don Basilio to the rendezvous to expose the Count and Susanna. The Countess changes clothes with Susanna, who decides to punish Figaro for his suspicions by remaining hidden but allowing him to overhear her joyfully anticipate her “tryst” with the Count. Looking for Barbarina, Cherubino enters and nearly ruins the Countess's plot. Figaro soon stumbles onto what is happening. Everyone now participates in the game of putting the Count in his place after he has tried to seduce his own wife disguised as Susanna. Before the “day of madness” is over, all is resolved and love is in the air.

HGO PERFORMANCE HISTORY
HGO has presented The Marriage of Figaro regularly since its first staging here during the 1973–74 season with a young Frederica von Stade as Cherubino. Additional stagings were seen on the main stage during seasons 1988–89 (with Renée Fleming in her self-described “big break” as the Countess, Thomas Allen as the Count, and Susanne Mentzer as Cherubino), 1990–91 (again with Fleming and Allen), 1997–98 (with Nicole Heaston as Susanna and Scott Hendricks and Joyce DiDonato both in the alternate cast as the Count and Cherubino, respectively), 2005–06 (with Ana María Martínez as the Countess and this season's Susanna, Heidi Stober, as Barbarina), and 2010–11 (featuring the HGO debuts of Luca Pisaroni as the Count and Ellie Dehn as the Countess).

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

WINTER 2016  36  HGO.org
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA ORCHESTRA

PATRICK SUMMERS, ARTISTIC AND MUSIC DIRECTOR — Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

VIOLIN
Denise Tarrant *, Concertmaster
The Sarah and Ernest Butler Concertmaster Chair
Jonathan Godfrey *, Assistant Concertmaster
Erica Robinson *, Principal Second Violin
Carrie Kauk *, Assistant Principal Second Violin
Miriam Belyatsky *
Hae-a Lee *
Sarah Ludwig *
Chavdar Parashkevov *
Anabel Ramirez *
Rasa Kalesnykaite *
Mary Reed *
Linda Sanders *
Oleg Sulyga *
Sylvia VerMeulen *
Melissa Williams *

VIOLA
Eliseo Rene Salazar *, Principal
Lorenzo Goifoiev *, Assistant Principal
Mary Fulgham *
Gayle Garcia-Shepard *
Erika Lawson *
Suzanne LeFevre *

CELLI
Barrett Sills *, Principal
Louis-Marie Fardet †, Assistant Principal
Erika Johnson *, Acting Assistant Principal
Wendy Smith-Butler *

FLUTE
Seth Allyn Morris *, Principal
Christina Medawar *

OBOE
Elizabeth Priestly Siffert *, Principal
Alison Chung *

CLARINET
Sean Krissman *, Principal
Eric Chi *

BASSOON
Amanda Swain *, Principal
Conrad Cornelison *

FRENCH HORN
Sarah Cranston *, Principal
Kimberly Penrod Minson *

TRUMPET
Jim Vassallo *, Principal
Randal Adams *

TROMBONE
Thomas Hultén †, Principal
Mark Holley †

TUBA
Mark Barton †, Principal

HARP
Joan Eidman †, Principal

PERCUSSION
Richard Brown †, Principal

FORTEPIANO
Patrick Harvey ‡
Mr. and Mrs. James A. Elkins Endowed Chair

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

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HOUSTON GRAND OPERA CHORUS

RICHARD BADO, CHORUS MASTER—The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair
EMILY SENTURIA, ASSISTANT CHORUS MASTER

Dennis Arrowsmith
Brennan Blankenship
Christopher Childress
Cecilia Duarte
Julia Fox
Suzanne Gregory
Frankie Hickman
James Jennings
Joe Key
Laurie Lester
Keenan Manceaux
Kathleen Manley
Katherine McDaniel
Patrick Perez
Saïd Pressley
John Weinel

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

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

For tickets or information visit HGO.org/SpecialEvents or call Clare Greene at 713-546-0277
HARRY BICKET (UNITED KINGDOM)
Conductor
Internationally renowned conductor Harry Bicket is making his HGO debut with Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* and also conducts the concurrent performances of Dvořák’s *Rusalka*. He was named artistic director of The English Concert in 2007 and became chief conductor of Santa Fe Opera in 2013. Born in Liverpool, he studied at the Royal College of Music and Oxford University and is an accomplished harpsichordist. Plans for the 2015–16 season include returns to Oslo Philharmonic and Royal Northern Sinfonia as well as his debut with Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France; *Maometto* with Canadian Opera Company; and, with The English Concert, continuing a Handel cycle with *Orlando*, which tours to Europe and America. Wigmore Hall appearances include programs featuring countertenors Jestyn Davies and Andreas Scholl. Highlights of recent seasons include productions for Santa Fe Opera (*Fidelio, La finita giardiniera*); the Metropolitan Opera (*Rodelinda, La clemenza di Tito, Giulio Cesare*); Canadian Opera Company (*Hercules*); Gran Teatre del Liceu (*Agrippina, Lucio Silla*); Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Rinaldo*); and Bordeaux Opera (*Alcina*). He has also toured extensively with The English Concert including the recent critically acclaimed concert versions of Handel’s *Theodora, Alcina*, and *Hercules* at venues such as Carnegie Hall, Théâtre des Champs Élysées; and Barbican Centre, London. Future plans include extensive concert and touring projects with The English Concert and visits to the Cleveland Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera, and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

IAN RUTHERFORD (UNITED KINGDOM)
Revival Director
Ian Rutherford was the revival director for HGO’s *The Magic Flute* (2015) and *Ariodante* (2002). He studied at Guildhall School of Music, Sheffield University, and London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art before joining English National Opera (ENO). As a staff director for ENO, he directed critically acclaimed revivals of *The Barber of Seville*, *Falstaff*, *Madame Butterfly*, *The Magic Flute*, and *La bohème*. With Diva Opera (Britain’s premier chamber opera company) he has directed *Tosca*, *La traviata*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and *La belle Hélène*; these productions have toured throughout Europe. He has also directed new productions of *Madame Butterfly* for Opera Holland Park, *Cendrillon* for Royal Academy of Music, *La bohème* for Blackheath Concert Halls, and the world premiere of Christopher Bowers-Broadbent’s *The Face* at Gray’s Inn, London. Rutherford directed a new production of *Il matrimonio segreto* for Festival les Azuriales, which was so favorably received in 2003 that it returned in 2004. He has directed revivals of many David Alden productions, including the *Ariadante* seen at HGO (also Vlaamse Opera and Ópera de Oviedo); *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Canadian Opera Company, Opera Gothenburg, and Washington National Opera); *Peter Grimes* (Opera de Oviedo and Deutsche Oper Berlin); and *Otello*. He directed *Billy Budd* for the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Melly Still’s *Rusalka* for Opera Slovenia, and David McVicar’s *Die Meistersinger* at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Future plans include *The Marriage of Figaro* at Glyndebourne, *Otello* in Madrid, and *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Bonn.

MICHAEL GRANDAGE (UNITED KINGDOM)
Production
Michael Grandage’s work has been seen previously at HGO in his production of *Madame Butterfly*, which returned last season after its acclaimed premiere here in 2010. He is the artistic director of the Michael Grandage Company in London, where his work includes *Photograph 51*, *Henry V*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *Peter and Alice*, *Privates on Parade*, *Dawn French: 30 Million Minutes* (national tour and West End run at the Vaudeville Theatre later this year), and the forthcoming feature film *Genius*. At the Donmar Warehouse, where he served as artistic director from 2002 to 2012, his productions included *Richard II, Luise Miller, King Lear, Red* (also Broadway and Los Angeles), *Hamlet* with Jude Law (also Elsinore and New York), *Ivanov*, *Twelfth Night*, *Madame de Sade*, *The Chalk Garden*, *Don Juan in Soho*, *Frost/Nixon* (also Gielgud, New York, U.S. tour), *Otello*, *The Wild Duck*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Grand Hotel*, *After Miss Julie*, *Caligula*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, and *Passion Play*. With Sheffield Theatres, where he was the artistic director from 2000 to 2005, his numerous productions included *Don Carlos*, which also transferred to the Gielgud Theatre in London. Grandage’s *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Billy Budd* have been seen at Glyndebourne and his *Don Giovanni* at the Metropolitan Opera. He has received Tony, Olivier, Evening Standard, Critics’ Circle, South Bank, and Drama Desk awards and was appointed CBE in the 2011 Queen’s Birthday Honors. His book, *A Decade at the Donmar*, was published in 2012 by Constable and Robins.

CHRISTOPHER ORAM (UNITED KINGDOM)
Set and Costume Designer
Christopher Oram has collaborated with Michael Grandage on numerous productions since 1996, including the production of *Madame Butterfly* seen at HGO in 2010 and 2015. His work includes *Photograph 51*, *Henry V*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (also Broadway), *Peter and Alice*, and *Privates on Parade*, all with the Michael Grandage Company/West End; *Macbeth* for the Manchester International Festival and the Park Avenue Armory in New York; *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* for Broadway; *Company* for the Sheffield Crucible Theatre; *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Otello*, *Grand Hotel*, *Rusalka*.
World Music, Red, King Lear, Passion, Parade, and Frost/Nixon for the Donmar Warehouse; Hamlet, Madame de Sade, Twelfth Night, and Ivanov for the Donmar Warehouse at Wyndham’s Theatre in the West End; Man and Superman, Summerfolk, Danton’s Death, Stuff Happens, Power, and The Marriage Play/ Finding the Sun for the National Theatre, London; Evita at London’s Adelphi Theatre and on Broadway; and a double-bill of Wolf Hall and Bring Up the Bodies for the Royal Shakespeare Company: Stratford, London, and New York. His designs for Billy Budd were seen at Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Brooklyn Academy of Music, and his work in Don Giovanni was seen at the Metropolitan Opera. He received a 2004 Olivier Award for Power and a 2010 Tony Award for Wakening Shadows.

PAULE CONSTABLE (UNITED KINGDOM)
Original Lighting Designer
Paule Constable’s work has been seen previously at HGO in Manon (2003) and in the concurrent production of Rusalka. Constable has won four Olivier Awards for Best Lighting, for The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time (2013), The Chalk Garden (2009), Don Carlos (2006), and His Dark Materials (2005), and Tony Awards for Best Lighting for The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time (2015) and War Horse (2011). She was the recipient of the Hospital Award for Contribution to Theatre, won the L.A. Drama Desk Award for Les Misérables, War Horse, and Sleeping Beauty, and received both the New York Critics Circle Award and Drama Desk Award for War Horse on Broadway. She is an associate of the National Theatre, the Lyric Hammersmith, and Matthew Bourne’s New Adventures.

ANDREW MAY (UNITED KINGDOM)
Associate Lighting Designer
Andrew May is making his HGO debut. He began his theater career at Glyndebourne, where he worked for nine years before deciding to pursue a career as a freelance lighting designer. At Glyndebourne, he was an associate lighting designer for numerous productions while working alongside designers such as Paule Constable, Mark Henderson, and Joel Adams. He also relit Peter Van Praet’s production of The Coronation of Poppea and Bernd Purkrabek’s Don Pasquale for Glyndebourne on Tour. Other opera credits include Don Pasquale, The Marriage of Figaro (festival revival of the 2012 original and Glyndebourne on Tour); L’heure espagnole and l’enfant et les sortilèges for Rome Opera; Così fan tutte for L.A. Opera; The Marriage of Figaro (Belgrade and U.K. tour); La traviata (Soho Theatre and U.K. tour); Die Fledermaus and La fanciulla del West for Opera Up Close; Julian Philips’s The Yellow Sofa (Linbury Studio Theatre at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and Glyndebourne on Tour); Of Water and Tears, Night Pieces, The Yellow Sofa, Stravinsky’s Renard and Mavra, La descente d’Orphée aux enfers, Wakening Shadows, and Ceremony of Carols (Glyndebourne); Jonathan Dove’s Mansfield Park (Hampstead Garden Opera); Carmen (Riverside Opera); and Falstaff and Agrippina (Iford Arts). His forthcoming projects include the Tennessee Williams play In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel.

BEN WRIGHT (UNITED KINGDOM)
Movement Director
Ben Wright, now making his debut at HGO, works in contemporary dance, opera, and theater. He trained at the Ballet Rambert School and worked primarily as a performer from 1991 to 2006. He is the associate artistic director of Skanes Dansteater Sweden where his recent work The Feeling of Going—a staging of Icelandic pop legend Jónsi’s album Go in collaboration with Malmö Opera—was presented in the Swedish Biennale. He also directs bgroup, his own project company in the United Kingdom. Recent choreography includes Insatiable Inflatable Candelion (National Theatre, Wales); Les fiançailles au couvent (Théâtre du Capitole, Toulouse); La bohème (Washington National Opera); My Night With Reg and Twelfth Night (Donmar Warehouse/West End); A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Privates on Parade (Michael Grandage Company); The Perfect American (English National Opera, Teatro Real Madrid, Brisbane Festival); The Marriage of Figaro and Knight Crew (Glyndebourne Opera); Don Giovanni (Metropolitan Opera); and Tobias and the Angel and In the Red and Brown Water (Young Vic Theatre). In 2015, Wright became a Clore Fellow as part of the United Kingdom’s cross-disciplinary leadership program for the cultural and creative sector. Future projects include choreographing and directing To See the World While the Light Lasts (Skanes Dansteater/Malmö Opera) and Spectrum (Skanes Dansteater).

RICHARD BADO (UNITED STATES)
The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair
Chorus Master
Richard Bado has served as HGO’s chorus master since 1988 and was concurrently the company’s head of music staff from 1991 to 2005. The HGO Studio alumnus (1984–85) conducted Show Boat at the Cairo Opera House in Egypt (1989) and Robert Wilson’s production of Four Saints in Three Acts on tour at the Edinburgh Festival (1996). He received HGO’s Silver Rose Award in 2013, in honor of his 25th anniversary as chorus master. He has conducted for La Scala, Opéra National de Paris, New York City Opera, the Aspen Music Festival, Tulsa Opera, the Russian National Orchestra, the Florida Philharmonic, the Montreal Symphony, Wolf Trap Opera, and Houston Ballet. An accomplished pianist, Bado appeared this fall in an Australian recital tour with Renée Fleming. He has also played for Cecilia Bartoli, Frederica von Stade, Susan Graham, Denyce Graves, Marcello Giordani, Ramón Vargas, Samuel Ramey, Jamie Barton, Ryan McKinny, and Nathan Gunn. Bado holds music degrees from the Eastman School of Music, where he received the 2000 Alumni Achievement Award, and West Virginia University, and also studied advanced
choral conducting with Robert Shaw. He is the director of the Opera Studies Program at Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music. He will conduct HGO’s Carousel this spring.

**ADAM PLACHETKA (CZECH REPUBLIC)**
Bass-baritone—Figaro

Prague native Adam Plachetka is making his HGO debut. A first-place winner of the Antonín Dvořák International Vocal Competition, Plachetka made his debut at the National Theatre in Prague in 2005. Since then, he has appeared in Prague and elsewhere as the title role in Don Giovanni, Figaro in The Marriage of Figaro, Nardo in La finta giardiniera, Argante in Rinaldo, and Guglielmo in Così fan tutte. He has appeared as Don Basilio in The Barber of Seville and Papageno in The Magic Flute at the Prague State Opera, and he is a regular guest artist of the Salzburg Festival (Benvenuto Cellini, Rusalka, The Marriage of Figaro, and Don Giovanni). Other engagements include Ping in Turandot and Argante for the Seoul Arts Center, the Gamekeeper in Rusalka for Opéra de Nice, Sylvano in La Calisto at the Bavarian State Opera, Nardo for the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Guglielmo in Baden-Baden, and Almaviva in The Marriage of Figaro for Opéra Comédie Montpellier. In September 2010, Plachetka joined the ensemble of the Vienna State Opera, singing Schaunard in La bohème, Don Basilio, Melisso in Alcina, Masetto and the title role in Don Giovanni, Dulcamara in The Elixir of Love, Figaro, Guglielmo, and Publio in La clemenza di Tito. Engagements for this season and beyond include Figaro for his Lyric Opera of Chicago debut and at the Vienna State Opera and the Salzburg Festival, Belcore in The Elixir of Love at the Metropolitan Opera and further appearances at the Met, in Vienna, and at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden.

**JOSHUA HOPKINS (CANADA)**
Baritone—Count Almaviva

Chosen by Opera News as one of 25 artists poised for major careers, HGO Studio alumnus Joshua Hopkins (2003–05) has performed regularly with HGO, including Marcello in La bohème, Junius in The Rape of Lucretia, performances of Sharpless in Madame Butterfly, Kinesias in the world premiere of Mark Adamo’s Lysistrata, the Pilot in The Little Prince (2004), a role he reprised this past December, and many others. His engagements for the 2015–16 season include return engagements with Opera Lyra Ottawa in

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**10th Anniversary Concert**
Featuring Ana María Martínez

**Tuesday, February 2, 2016, 7:00 pm**

Cullen Theater | Wortham Center

Tickets available at www.aperioamericas.org
the title role in The Barber of Seville; with Lyric Opera of Chicago as Mercutio in Bartlett Sher’s production of Roméo et Juliette, and with Santa Fe Opera as Olivier in a new production of Capriccio. In concert this season, he makes his debuts with the New World Symphony in an all-Schumann program under the baton of Michael Tilson Thomas and the Hamburg Symphony Orchestra as Dr. Pangloss in Candide conducted by Jeffrey Tate. Recent highlights include Taddeusz in The Passenger with Lyric Opera of Chicago, the title role in The Barber of Seville for Canadian Opera Company, Count Almaviva in The Marriage of Figaro for The Dallas Opera and with the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, and Schaunard in a revival of Franco Zeffirelli’s production of La bohème at the Metropolitan Opera.

AILYN PÉREZ (UNITED STATES)
Soprano—Countess Almaviva
Ailyn Pérez made her HGO debut as Desdemona in the 2014–15 season-opening production of Otello. She has won both the 2012 Richard Tucker Award (the only Hispanic recipient in the award’s 35-year history) and the 15th annual Plácido Domingo Award.

A few career highlights include Violetta in La traviata for Hamburg State Opera (new production); Opera de Oviedo; Bavarian State Opera; San Francisco Opera; and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; and further Royal Opera performances as the title role in Manon and her role debut as Liù in Turandot. Recent engagements include her Metropolitan Opera debut as Micaela in Carmen, Mimi in La bohème in Hamburg, Violetta in La traviata in Zurich, Adina in The Elixir of Love in Munich, a return to La Scala to sing Mimi in performances of La bohème conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, and creating the role of Tatyanà Bakst in the world premiere of Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally’s Great Scott at The Dallas Opera conducted by Patrick Summers earlier this season. This season’s engagements also include a concert tour of Rachmaninoff’s “Vocalise” and the Letter Scene from Eugene Onegin with New Century Chamber Orchestra, Adina in The Elixir of Love for Deutsche Oper Berlin, a return to Dallas as the title role in Manon and to the Metropolitan Opera as Musetta in La bohème, and a recital for Santa Fe Desert Chorale. Further ahead, she will appear as Tatyanà in Eugene Onegin, Giulietta in I Capuleti e i Montecchi, Violetta, and other roles with such companies as the Met, Opera de Oviedo, Zurich Opera, and Berlin State Opera.

HEIDI STOBER (UNITED STATES)
Soprano—Susanna
HGO Studio alumna Heidi Stober (2004–06) won first prize in the 2004 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. Roles at HGO include Musetta in La bohème (2012); Atalanta in Xerxes (2010); Blonde in The Abduction from the Seraglio (2008); stepping in on short notice for performances of Norina in Don Pasquale (2006); Drusilla in The Coronation of Poppea (2006); and La China in the world premiere of Daniel Catán’s Salsipuedes (2004). With Deutsche Oper Berlin she has appeared as Pamina in The Magic Flute, Micaela in Carmen, Susanna in The Marriage of Figaro, Adina in a new production of The Elixir of Love, Gretel in Hansel and Gretel (the role in which she made her Metropolitan Opera debut during the 2011–12 season), Oscar in A Masked Ball, Nannetta in Falstaff, Zerlina in Don Giovanni, and Princess Ninette in Robert Carsen’s new production of Prokofiev’s L’amour des trois oranges. The 2015–16 season includes her role debut as Johanna in Sweeney Todd at San Francisco Opera conducted by Patrick Summers; a return to the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Valencienne in The Merry Widow, directed by Susan Stroman and led by Sir Andrew Davis; and her company and role debut at Dresden Semperoper singing the title role in Handel’s Alcina as well as performances of Micaela in Carmen. She continues her relationship with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, performing Pamina, Gretel, and Micaela. Concert appearances include Handel’s Messiah with the New York Philharmonic with Jane Glover and a joint recital with her husband, baritone Simon Pauly, in Berlin.

LAUREN SNOUFFER (UNITED STATES)
Soprano—Cherubino
HGO Studio alumna Lauren Snouffer (2011–13) won third prize in the 2011 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. She most recently appeared at HGO as Ellie May Chipley in Show Boat (2013); other roles include Elvira in The Italian Girl in Algiers, Thibault in Don Carlos, and Lucia in The Rape of Lucretia (2012); and Rosina in performances of The Barber of Seville (2011). This season, she performs in Mozart’s Requiem with Harry Christophers and the Handel and Haydn Society, Beethoven’s Egmont with Markus Stenz and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Poulenc’s Gloria with Houston Ballet, and Handel’s Messiah with Mercury of Houston. She returns to HGO later this season as Carrie Pipperidge in Carousel. Highlights of past seasons include Lyric Opera of Chicago presentations of Rusalka and La clemenza di Tito, The Magic Flute at Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Susanna in The Marriage of Figaro at Atlanta Opera, Written on Skin at Tanglewood and the Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse, a New York Philharmonic debut in HK Gruber’s Gloria—A Pig Tale, and Bernstein’s Candide with the São Paulo Symphony. A graduate of Rice University and The Juilliard School, Snouffer won a 2013 Sara Tucker Study Grant from the Richard Tucker Music Foundation and a Richard F. Gold Career Grant, and was a grand finalist in the 2012 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.
CATHERINE COOK (UNITED STATES)
Mezzo-soprano—Marcellina
Catherine Cook has appeared at HGO as Berta in The Barber of Seville (2011), Tisbe in La Cenerentola (2007), and Martha in Faust (2007). This season, her engagements include Sweeney Todd and Berta in The Barber of Seville at San Francisco Opera, where she was an Adler Fellow and participated in the Merola Program, and Zosha in Jake Heggie’s Out of Darkness in a return engagement with Seattle’s Music of Remembrance. Recent performances include Mrs. McLean in Carlisle Floyd’s Susannah and Marcellina, both with San Francisco Opera; Mrs. De Rocher in Dead Man Walking with Opera Parallèle; Gertrude Stein in the premiere of Tom Cipullo’s chamber opera After Life with Seattle’s Music of Remembrance; performances of the title role in the world premiere of Tobias Picker’s Dolores Claiborne with San Francisco Opera; Dame Quickly in Falstaff with Opera Santa Barbara; Carole and Natalia in Adam Gorb’s Anya 17 with Opera Parallèle; and a return to the Metropolitan Opera as Marthe in Faust. In concert she has been a soloist in Ravel’s Chansons madécasses and Jake Heggie’s The Deepest Desire for Noe Valley Chamber Music’s 20th season opening night. She heads the Department of Voice at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, as the Frederica von Stade Distinguished Chair in Voice.

PEIXIN CHEN (CHINA)
Bass—Doctor Bartolo
Peixin Chen, who completed his tenure as an HGO Studio artist last May, has been seen at HGO as Sarastro in outdoor performances of The Magic Flute (2015), Montano in Otello (2014), and Ferrando in Il trovatore (2013), as well as the Second SS Officer in The Passenger (2014), both at HGO and on tour to the Lincoln Center Festival. He was the third prize winner in HGO’s 2012 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. During the 2015–16 season, he takes on the title role of The Marriage of Figaro for Opera Saratoga, and on the concert stage, he joins Andrés Orozco-Estrada and the Houston Symphony for Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Recent performances have featured Chen in debuts as Sparafucile at the Santa Fe Opera in a new production of Rigoletto and at the Washington National Opera as Dulcamara in The Elixir of Love. He has also performed in Aida under the baton of Zubin Mehta as well as both Bartolo in The Marriage of Figaro and Basilio in The Barber of Seville at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing. As a member of the Merola Program under the auspices of San Francisco Opera, Chen sang Basilio in The Barber of Seville.
KEITH JAMESON (UNITED STATES)
Tenor—Don Basilio
Keith Jameson makes his Houston Grand Opera debut in The Marriage of Figaro and also sings the Gamekeeper in HGO’s concurrent performances of Rusalka. He regularly appears with such companies as the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los Angeles Opera, and Santa Fe Opera. He has been heard in over 60 performances at the Metropolitan Opera, including Falstaff and Carmen (both Live from the Met in HD and on DVD), Iolanta and Francesca da Rimini (both Live from the Met in HD) and Billy Budd, among others. His L.A. Opera appearances include Valletto in The Coronation of Poppea, Goro in Madame Butterfly, Pietro in The Stigmatized, Triquet in Eugene Onegin, and the Novice in Billy Budd. He recently created the role of Yab in the world premiere of Mark Adamo’s Becoming Santa Claus with The Dallas Opera; debuted as the title role in Candide with Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Baltimore Symphony, and the Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo; performed and recorded for commercial release Haydn’s The Creation and Lord Nelson Mass with Boston Baroque; and performed with Atlanta Opera as Grandpa Joe in The Golden Ticket (recorded for commercial release).

CHRIS BOZEKA (UNITED STATES)
Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow
Tenor—Don Curzio
Chris Bozeka, a first-year artist with the HGO Studio, won second prize in the 2015 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. He made his HGO debut in December as the Drunkard/the Lamplighter in The Little Prince. He earned his master’s degree at the University of Cincinnati College–Conservatory of Music (CCM), where he appeared as Nemorino in The Elixir of Love, Ernesto in Don Pasquale, and the Narrator in Owen Wingrave. Bozeka was a winner at the 2014 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions–Ohio District. This past summer as an artist with the San Francisco Opera’s Merola Program, he appeared as Rinuccio in Gianni Schicchi. He appears as the Huntsman in HGO’s concurrent production of Rusalka, and later this season he will perform Male Emilia in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players. This summer, he will make his Glimmerglass Opera debut as Pirelli in Sweeney Todd.
Songs about springtime animate our 2016 Houston Early Music Festival program, entitled *All in a Garden Green* after an English folksong. A menu of delectable tunes mixes items from English, Italian, French, and Spanish musical cultures and includes Vivaldi’s Spring, along with songs and cantatas by William Byrd, Thomas Morely, Clément Jannequin, Juan del Encina and others. Love will definitely be in the air at this Valentine’s weekend program!

**FEDERICO DE MICHELIS (ARGENTINA)**
Beth Madison Fellow
Bass-baritone—Antonio
Born in Buenos Aires, first-year HGO Studio artist Federico De Michelis won third prize in the 2015 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. Earlier this season, he sang performances of Angelotti in *Tosca*, Zaretsky in *Eugene Onegin*, and the King in *The Little Prince*. He was previously a member of the Opera Studio of Teatro Argentino de La Plata, where he performed Antonio in *Il viaggio a Reims*, El Hombre Mayor in Gerardo Gandini’s contemporary opera *Ciudad Ausente*, Johann in *Werther*, Narrator from Rota’s *I due timidi*, Don Alfonso in *Cosi fan tutte*, Plutone in *Il ballo dell’ingrate*, and Tempo from *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria*. Later this season at HGO, he will perform Thomas Betterton in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s *Prince of Players*. Next summer, he will sing Colline in *La bohème* at the Aspen Music Festival.

**PUREUM JO (KOREA)**
Mr. Joseph Matulevich and Ms. Sasha Davis/Nancy and Ted Haywood Fellow
Soprano—Barbarina
Second-year HGO Studio artist Pureum Jo sang Papagena and performances of Pamina in *The Magic Flute* last season at HGO, and earlier this season she sang Becca in the world premiere of *O Columbia* and the Rose in *The Little Prince*. She has performed the title role in *Matsukaze* (Spoleto Festival U.S.A., Lincoln Center Festival); Blanche in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (The Chautauqua Institution); and Micaela in *Carmen* (Aspen Music Festival). She has also performed in the Marilyn Horne Foundation’s recital series *The Song Continues*, in Juilliard’s *Wednesdays at One* series, and with New York City’s Voices of Ascension. This past summer, she sang Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* with the Aspen Music Festival and next summer she returns to Aspen as Musetta in *La bohème*. Later this season at HGO, she will appear as Miss Frayne in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s *Prince of Players*. Next season she will make her San Francisco Opera debut as Dai Yu in the world premiere of Bright Sheng’s *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

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A Lyric Fairy Tale in Three Acts
Music by Antonín Dvořák
Libretto by Jaroslav Kvapil
Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center
Sung in Czech with English Projected Translations

CAST (IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE)

First Wood Nymph  D’Ana Lombard †
                  Lynne Murray Sr. Educational Foundation Fellow
Second Wood Nymph Sofia Selowsky †
                  Mr. and Mrs. James W. Crownover Fellow
Third Wood Nymph Megan Samarin †
                  Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow
Vodník, a water sprite Richard Paul Fink ‡
Rusalka Ana María Martínez ‡
                  Lynn Wyatt Great Artist 2010–11
Ježibaba, a witch Jill Grove ‡
Hunter Chris Bozeka †
                  Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow
Prince Brian Jagde *
Gamekeeper Keith Jameson
Kitchen Girl Mane Galoyan †*
                  Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Bahr/Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson Fellow
Foreign Princess Maida Hundeling *

This production was created for Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

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

Conductor          Harry Bicket
Production         Melly Still *
Revival Director   Donna Stirrup *
Set and Costume Designer Rae Smith *
Original Lighting Designer Paule Constable
Associate Lighting Designer Jeremy Turnbull *
Movement Director  Rick Nodine *
Ballet Master / Dance Captain Christian From *
Chorus Master      Richard Bado ‡

Musical Preparation Peter Pasztor ‡
Bradley Moore
Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair
Sahar Nouri †
Audrey Jones Beck Endowed Fund/John M. O’Quinn Foundation Endowed Fund Fellow
Miloš Repicky *
Czech Diction Coach  Miloš Repicky *
Stage Manager       Kristen E. Burke
Assistant Director  Katrina Bachus
Supertitles by      Ian D. Julier, adapted by Paul Hopper

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Supertitles cued by Kirill Kuzman †
Joan Hacken Bitar, M.D./Bill and Melinda Brunger Fellow

By arrangement with Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., agent for DILIA—Theatrical, Literary and Audiovisual Agency, Association of Authors.

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

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

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

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

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

This production is being recorded for archival purposes.
THE PERFORMANCE LASTS APPROXIMATELY 3 HOURS AND 15 MINUTES, INCLUDING TWO INTERMISSIONS.

Note: The characters are referred to by generic terms from Slavic mythology: Rusalka means water nymph and Vodník water sprite, while Ježibaba is a standard name for a witch.

Setting: A lake in a forest; a castle

ACT I
As wood nymphs dance by the lake, the moonlight wakens the Water Sprite, who tries to lure one of them into the depths. They mock him and run away. His daughter, Rusalka, sick at heart, tells him of her yearning to become human.

Rusalka’s father is shocked to learn that she loves a human being—a prince who comes to bathe in the lake. He tells her she must consult the witch, Ježibaba, warning her that she will be doomed if claimed by a man.

Rusalka appeals to the moon to tell her lover she is waiting for him. She wakes Ježibaba and asks her to give her a human soul. Ježibaba informs her that the ability to speak to humans will be denied her. If she fails to win love, she will be forever accursed; if he rejects her, her lover, too, will be eternally damned.

Confident of her love, Rusalka agrees. Hunters approach, among them the Prince, seeking Rusalka. He sends the others away, and sees Rusalka standing silently before him. Unable to answer him, she throws herself into his arms. He leads her away as the other water nymphs lament her leaving.

INTERMISSION

ACT II
At the Prince’s castle, the Gamekeeper and Kitchen Girl discuss events. The Prince has brought a silent female back with him from the woods, and seems likely to marry her; the Gamekeeper hopes that they will be delivered from such sinister magic. Yet there is hope: the Prince is increasingly attracted to the Foreign Princess.

The servants disappear as the Prince enters with Rusalka. Though he is still drawn to her, he complains that she is devoid of passion. Watching them as she enters, the Foreign Princess vows to separate them. She asks why the Prince’s bride-to-be is so silent. As the Prince recalls his duties as a host and leaves with the Princess, he tells Rusalka to dress as befits the wedding ball.

As the ball begins, Rusalka looks on broken-hearted while the Prince dances with the Princess. Her father arrives to warn her that death awaits her back at the lake; she will return eternally damned. As the Prince embraces the Princess, Rusalka acknowledges that he has betrayed her.

Rusalka suddenly throws herself into the Prince’s arms, but he rejects her. As Rusalka’s father drags her away, the Prince falls stupefied. The Foreign Princess laughs.

INTERMISSION

ACT III
On a moonlit night at the lake, Rusalka sits sadly. Deserted by the Prince and banished by her companions, she longs for death. Ježibaba mocks her, relenting only so far as to tell her that if she kills the Prince herself, she can return to her former state. She gives Rusalka a knife, which the latter throws into the lake.

The Gamekeeper and Kitchen Girl arrive at the witch’s cottage, seeking a cure for the Prince’s illness, caused by the sorceress Rusalka. The witch sends them packing and Rusalka’s father angrily chases them away. The wood nymphs return to dance until Vodník’s tale of his daughter’s undoing causes them to flee.

The Prince enters, once more seeking Rusalka. She appears, warning him that now she can mean only death to him. The Prince asks her to kiss him, to bring him peace. Rusalka finally agrees. He dies. She asks for God’s mercy on his soul and sinks back into the lake.

—By George Hall

Synopsis courtesy of Glyndebourne Productions Ltd.

HGO PERFORMANCE HISTORY
HGO has staged Rusalka previously only once, during the 1991–92 season, with Renée Fleming in the title role. Our current Vodník, Richard Paul Fink, sang the role for the first time in those performances.

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

**Patrick Summers, Artistic and Music Director—Margaret Alkek Williams Chair**

### Violin
- Denise Tarrant *, Concertmaster
- The Sarah and Ernest Butler Concertmaster Chair
- Jonathan Godfrey *, Assistant Concertmaster
- Erica Robinson *, Principal Second Violin
- Carrie Kauk *, Assistant Principal Second Violin
- Miriam Belyatsky *
- Hae-a Lee *
- Sarah Ludwig *
- Chavdar Parashkevov *
- Anabel Ramirez *
- Rasa Kalesnykaite *
- Mary Reed *
- Linda Sanders *
- Oleg Sulyga *
- Sylvia VerMeulen *
- Melissa Williams *
- Matt Detrick
- Andres Gonzalez
- Kana Kimura
- Maria Lin
- Mila Neal
- Rachel Shepard
- Hannah Watson

### Cello
- Barrett Sills *, Principal
- Louis-Marie Fardet †, Assistant Principal
- Erika Johnson *, Acting Assistant Principal
- Wendy Smith-Butler *
- Steven Wiggs *
- Kevin Downs
- Steve Estes

### Double Bass
- Dennis Whittaker *, Principal
- Erik Gronfor *, Assistant Principal
- Carla Clark *
- Deborah Dunham

### Viola
- Eliseo Rene Salazar *, Principal
- Lorento Golofeev *, Assistant Principal
- Mary Fulgham *
- Gayle Garcia-Shepard *
- Erika Lawson *
- Suzanne LeFevre *
- Matthew Carrington
- Dawson White

### Flute
- Seth Allyn Morris *, Principal
- Christina Medawar *

### Oboe
- Elizabeth Priestly Siffert *, Principal
- Alison Chung *

### English Horn
- Robert Ather Holt

### Clarinet
- Sean Krissman *, Principal
- Eric Chi *

### Bass Clarinet
- Molly Mayfield

### Bassoon
- Amanda Swain *, Principal
- Conrad Cornelison *

### French Horn
- Sarah Cranston *, Principal
- Kimberly Penrod Minson *
- Kevin McIntyre
- Gavin Reed

### Trumpet
- Jim Vassallo *, Principal
- Randal Adams *
- Charlie Geyer

### Trombone
- Thomas Hultén *, Principal
- Mark Holley *

### Bass Trombone
- Jared Lantz

### Tuba
- Mark Barton *, Principal

### Harp
- Joan Eidman *, Principal

### Timpani
- Nancy Nelson *, Principal

### Percussion
- Richard Brown *, Principal
- Christina Carroll
- Karen Slotter

### Banda
- James Wilson, Horn
- Emily Nagel, Horn

### Orchestra Personnel Manager
- Richard Brown

* HGO Orchestra core musician
† HGO Orchestra core musician on leave this production
Richard Bado, Chorus Master—The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair
Emily Senturia, Assistant Chorus Master

Ofelia Adame
Geordie Alexander
Debra Alons
Leslie Biffle
Zachary Bryant
Christopher Childress
Patrick Contreras
Sybil Crawford
Robert Dingman Jr.
Stacia Morgan Dunn
Ashly Evans
Ami Figg
Megan Gryga
Nancy Hall
Frankie Hickman
Jon Janacek
Joy Jonstone
Joe Key

Kirsten Lutz Koerner
Wesley Landry
Keenan Manceaux
Kathleen Manley
Heath Martin
Antonio Martinez
Katherine McDaniel
Natasha Monette
Jeff Monette
Mollie Harmon Osborne
Patrick Perez
Cristina Perez
James Rodriguez
Paul Joseph Serna
Julie Thornton
Leigh Tomlinson
John Weinel
Jennifer Wright

Dancers

Nathan Brumbaugh
Kevin Ferguson
Kristen Frankiewicz
Richard Freeman
Christian From
Emily Snouffer

Supernumeraries

Luke Fedell
Josephine Ganner
Dave Harris
Brock Hatton
Connor Lyon
Chelsea Ryan McCurdy
Darin Montemayor
Kelley Peters
Catherine Pope
Andrew Runk
Dustin A. Salinas
John Watkins
Rodney S. White
Vicki Wood
**HARRY BICKET (UNITED KINGDOM)**

Conductor

For information about Harry Bicket, please see p. 39.

**RAE SMITH (UNITED KINGDOM)**

Set and Costume Designer

Rae Smith is making her Houston Grand Opera debut. Her designs include Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci for the Metropolitan Opera, The Tempest for Birmingham Royal Ballet, and War Horse for London’s National Theatre and Broadway, for which she won Olivier and Tony Awards, respectively. Other designs for the National include Tori Amos’s Light Princess, This House, Season’s Greetings, All’s Well That Ends Well, St. Joan, A Pillar of the Community, The Veil, The Seafarer, and Or You Could Kiss Me. Other work in theater includes designing Theatre of Blood, a collaboration between the National Theatre and Improvable, and Street of Crocodiles and The Visit for Complicite. She designed Wagner’s Ring cycle for Opera du Rhin, winning the Grand Prix for Outstanding Achievement in Opera; The Rite of Spring/Petrushka for Fabulous Beast; Prince of Pagodas for Birmingham Royal Ballet; Benvenuto Cellini for the English National Opera, and A Little Night Music for Théâtre du Châtelet.

**PAULE CONSTABLE (UNITED KINGDOM)**

Original Lighting Designer

For information about Paule Constable, please see p. 40.

**DONNA STIRRUP (UNITED KINGDOM)**

Revival Director

Donna Stirrup is making her HGO debut. She works regularly with English National Opera (ENO), Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Glyndebourne Tour, and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Recent work at ENO includes Rodelinda, The Girl of the Golden West, and the Olivier Award–winning production of The Mastersingers of Nuremberg. She directed Peter Grimes for ENO at the BBC Proms and revivals of On the Town in London and Paris. For Glyndebourne, her work includes Saul, Billy Budd, The Cunning Little Vixen, and this production of Rusalka, as well as a revival of The Miserly Knight and Gianni Schicchi in Tenerife. For the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, her work includes Gloriana and Anna Nicole. During the past year she has directed revivals of Thebans in Bonn (ENO production), Saul for Glyndebourne Tour, and Rodelinda at the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow. She is artistic director of Community in Music, an opera project in London for which she has directed productions of Hansel and Gretel and Noye’s Fludde and a semi-staging of Handel’s Messiah. Her next project is a semi-staging of Haydn’s Creation.

**JEREMY TURNBULL (UNITED KINGDOM)**

Associate Lighting Designer

Jeremy Turnbull, a lighting supervisor for London’s National Theatre, is making his HGO debut. His work in lighting design includes Glyndebourne Education productions of On the Rim of the World and A Shadow Awaits; East Sussex School of Performing Arts productions of Legend, The Wizard of Oz, Honk, Beauty and the Beast, Cinderella, Grimm Pickings, and The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe; and the Bexhill Light Operatic Dramatic Society’s productions of Anything Goes, Les Misérables, Guys and Dolls, Me and My Girl, The Pirates of Penzance, Dick Whittington, and Ruddigore. Lighting desk programming work includes Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, in the West End; and Eugene Onegin, Così fan tutte, and Tamerlano for Opera by Definition. Turnbull’s most recent engagements include serving as the revival lighting designer for this production of Rusalka for the Slovenian National Opera in Ljubljana and for Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg at Lyric Opera of Chicago and San Francisco Opera.
For information about Richard Bado, please see p. 40.

RICK NODINE (UNITED KINGDOM)
Movement Director

Rick Nodine is making his HGO debut. He worked as a dancer throughout the 1990s in theater, dance theater, digital media, television, site-specific works, opera, and pure dance. In 2001, he became a staff member at London Contemporary Dance School where he continues to teach composition and improvisation. He is an internationally recognized teacher of contemporary dance and has been invited to lead workshops in 12 different countries and more than 40 cities. He has been a guest teacher in many institutions and festivals such as CNDC Angers (France), National Taiwan University of Arts, Tanzfabrik Berlin, Freiburg Festival, and the Royal Ballet School. He has taught company class for many companies including Punchdrunk, Rambert Dance Company, and DV8. His recent choreographic work includes a solo that reached The Place Prize finals in 2013 and a dance installation in the Barbican Centre’s Curve Gallery in 2014. Nodine maintains an improvisational performance practice and has collaborated with many dancers, actors, and musicians to create improvised performance. He has choreographed for London's National Theatre, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, and Slovenian National Opera and Ballet Theatre.

CHRISTIAN FROM (DENMARK/U.K.)
Ballet Master/Dance Captain

Christian From, now making his HGO debut, has enjoyed an extremely diverse career as a dancer, actor, puppeteer, movement director, and choreographer. He joined this production of Rusalka in 2009 as a dancer and revival movement director. He has worked with such directors as Melly Still and Deborah Warner and movement director/choreographers Rick Nodine, Kim Brandstrup, and Marc Brew. Dance and theater companies include Peut-Être Theatre, Crucible Arts Collective, Saga Collective, ironINC, ThreeSixty Theatre, Punchdrunk, Attik Dance, Gravity & Levity, Young Vic, National Theatre of Faroe Islands, National Theatre of Scotland, and the National Theatre in London. In opera, he has worked with English National Opera, Slovenian National Opera, Opéra de Lyon, and Glyndebourne Festival Opera. Some highlights of his work are serving as puppeteer for The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe for ThreeSixty Theatre, performing the roles of Trapper/Cyclist/Adam in Melly Still’s production of From Morning to Midnight at the National Theatre, and both choreographing and performing as an aerialist with Magali Lanriot in Tiny Things.

RICHARD BADO (UNITED STATES)
The Sarah and Ernest Butler Chorus Master Chair
Chorus Master

For information about Richard Bado, please see p. 40.

ANA MARÍA MARTÍNEZ
(UNITED STATES)
Soprano—Rusalka

Ana María Martínez has returned regularly to HGO ever since winning first prize in the 1994 Eleanor McCollum Competition for Arias and training in the HGO Studio for the 1994–95 season. Last season, she reprised her acclaimed Cio-Cio-San in Madame Butterfly, a role she debuted here in 2010. Other HGO appearances include the title role in Carmen (2014), Rosina in The Barber of Seville (2011), Mimi in La bohème (2008, 2002); Donna Elvira in Don Giovanni (2006); Countess Almaviva in The Marriage of Figaro and Juliet in Romeo and Juliet (2005); and Lucero in the world premiere of Catán’s Salísptuedes (2004), among others. This season, she performs with L.A. Opera as Nedda in Franco Zeffirelli’s production of Pagliacci under the baton of Plácido Domingo and Cio-Cio-San with James Conlon conducting, and returns to Opera de Puerto Rico as Cio-Cio-San and to the Metropolitan Opera as Musetta in La bohème. She also has several concert engagements with Plácido Domingo during the season, including an event with the Salzburg Festival honoring his 40th anniversary with the festival as well as concerts in Marbella, Spain; Ensenada, Baja; and with the Lyric Opera of Chicago Orchestra under the direction of Sir Andrew Davis. Career milestones include her acclaimed role and house debut as Rusalka with the Glyndebourne Festival, a performance that was recorded live and released on the Glyndebourne label; Amelia in Simon Boccanegra opposite Domingo in the title role with L.A. Opera; and her debut with the Metropolitan Opera as Micaela in Carmen.

BRIAN JAGDE (UNITED STATES)
Tenor—The Prince

Brian Jagde is making his HGO debut. This season he also makes his role debut as Bacchus in Ariadne auf Naxos at the Minnesota Opera and his house debuts at the Teatro San Carlo as Don José in Carmen, led by Zubin Mehta, and Palm Beach Opera as Bacchus. He also returns to the Deutsche Oper Berlin as Don José and reprises the role in the U.S. premiere of Calixto Bieto’s acclaimed production of Carmen with San Francisco Opera. Jagde recently made several important debuts, including the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, as Pinkerton in Madame Butterfly, the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Cavaradossi in Tosca, and the Metropolitan Opera as Elemer in Arabella. A graduate of San Francisco Opera’s Adler and Merola programs, he has appeared on the company’s main stage as Pinkerton and Cavaradossi. Other recent engagements have included Don José at Opéra de Limoges; Cavaradossi and Narraboth in Salome at Santa Fe Opera; Cavaradossi at Deutsche Oper Berlin; Matteo in Arabella with the Minnesota Opera; Rodolfo in La bohème with the Ópera de Bellas Artes, the Castleton Festival, and the Munich
Philharmonic; Ismaele in Nabucco at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia, the Prince in Rusalka and Narraboth at Opera San Antonio, and his European debut in the title role of Werther and Macduff in Macbeth at the Grand Theater, Poznań, in Poland. His numerous awards include top prize at the Loren L. Zachary Competition in 2014 and both second prize and the Birgit Nilsson Prize in Plácido Domingo’s 2012 Operaalia Competition.

Richard Paul Fink (United States)
Baritone—Vodník, a water sprite
HGO Studio alumnus Richard Paul Fink (1984–87) has performed numerous roles at HGO, most notably Telramund in Lohengrin (2009, 1992); Jokanaan in Salome (1997); Vodník opposite Renée Fleming’s Rusalka (1991); and Klingsor in a new production of Parsifal staged by Robert Wilson (1992). Fink’s career has taken him to the Metropolitan Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Berlin State Opera, Opéra National de Paris, San Francisco Opera, Washington National Opera, San Diego Opera, Hamburg State Opera, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, Théâtre du Capitole, Opera Australia, and the Bregenz and Ravinia Festivals. Last season, he performed the role of Henry Kissinger in Nixon in China at San Diego Opera, as well as Alberich in the Ring cycle under Simon Rattle in Vienna. He has been particularly associated with the role of Alberich and has performed it with the Metropolitan Opera, The Dallas Opera, Seattle Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Los Angeles Opera, and San Francisco Opera, among others. In recent years he has performed in Tristan und Isolde at Teatro La Fenice in Venice; Rusalka at Teatro San Carlo in Naples; Die Frau ohne Schatten, Siegfried, and Götterdämmerung at the Metropolitan Opera; Nixon in China in Dallas; and Wozzeck in Santa Fe. This season’s engagements include Ulysses S. Grant/Nicholas Katzenbach in Appomattox with Washington National Opera.

Maida Hundeling (Germany)
Soprano—Foreign Princess
Maida Hundeling is making her HGO debut this season, she also sings Leonore in Fidelio and the title role in Turandot with the Slovakian National Theater and joins the Metropolitan Opera roster for its production of Turandot. She has previously sung The Flying Dutchman (Opéra de Montréal, Wiesbaden State Theater, Slovenian National Opera, Braunschweig State Theater, Theater Dortmund, National Theater of Brno) and in other German repertoire, Salome (Edmonton Opera, Vienna State Opera); Elektra (theaters of Bolzano, Piacenza, Modena, Ferrara, and Dessau); Fidelio (Edmonton Opera); Ariadne auf Naxos (Nuremberg State Theater, Slovakian State Theater); Tannhäuser (Oldenburg State Theater); and Oberon (Theater Münster). She has also sung the title roles in Turandot (Utah Opera, Theater Regensburg, Slovakian National Theater); Aida (Opera Leipzig); Jenůfa (Slovakian State Opera); and Tosca at the Vienna Volksoper, where she has also sung Giorgetta in Il tabarro. She has been a frequent guest with the Prague State Opera, where she has sung acclaimed performances of The Flying Dutchman, Turandot, Aida, Tosca, and Tiefland. At the National Theatre of Prague, she sang Martinů’s Greek Passion and The Tales of Hoffmann.

D’Ana Lombard (United States)
Soprano—First Wood Nymph
D’Ana Lombard joined the HGO Studio last season after winning first prize in the 2014 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. Her roles at HGO last season included First Lady in The Magic Flute and Kate Pinkerton in Madame Butterfly, and earlier this season she sang the Water in The Little Prince. The New York native was a member of the Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program at Los Angeles Opera for two seasons. With L.A. Opera, she covered Alice in Falstaff and the title role of Thaïs and sang Alisa in Lucia di Lammermoor. This past summer, she sang Rosina in The Ghosts of Versailles with Wolf Trap Opera and Eva in the world premiere of Jack Perla’s An American Dream with Seattle Opera. She will return to Wolf Trap Opera this summer to sing Mimi in La bohème.
WHO’S WHO

SOFIA SELOWSKY (UNITED STATES)
Mr. and Mrs. James W. Crownover Fellow Mezzo-soprano—Second Wood Nymph
Second-year HGO Studio artist Sofia Selowsky won third prize in HGO’s 2014 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias and sang Suzuki in Madame Butterfly at HGO last season. She earned her master’s degree at the University of Cincinnati College—Conservatory of Music (CCM) and has performed as a Gerdine Young Artist at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and as a Young Artist at the Glimmerglass Festival. Other previous roles include Mère Jeanne in Dialogues of the Carmelites, Lazuli in L’étoile, Véronique in Bizet’s Le docteur Miracle, and Cecilia March in the European premiere of Mark Adamo’s Little Women. She sang Despina in Così fan tutte with the Aspen Music Festival this past summer. This season at HGO, she sang the Fox in The Little Prince; later this season she will sing Nell Gwynn in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players and Eliza in the world premiere of David Hanlon and Stephanie Fleischmann’s The Root of the Wind Is Water. She recently made her Houston Symphony debut in Schumann’s The Pilgrimage of the Rose, conducted by Andrés Orozco-Estrada.

MEGAN SAMARIN (UNITED STATES)
Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow Mezzo-soprano—Third Wood Nymph
Megan Samarin, a second-year artist with the HGO Studio, was a finalist in HGO’s 2014 Eleanor McCollum Competition of Arias and is an alumna of HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy. Last season at HGO, she sang Johanna in Sweeney Todd and Second Lady in The Magic Flute. Earlier this season, she sang Olga in Eugene Onegin and performed Lady Columbia in HGOço’s world premiere of Gregory Spears and Royce Vavrek’s O Columbia. She has performed Marzia in Vivaldi’s Cato in Utica at Glimmerglass Opera; La Marchande in Les mamelles de Tirésias as a Wolf Trap Opera Studio Artist; Madame Larina in Eugene Onegin, Cherubino in John Davies’s The Three Little Pigs, Cis in Albert Herring, Third Graduate in Street Scene, and Ethel in 42nd Street with the Seagle Music Colony Young Artist Program; Soeur Mathilde in Dialogues of the Carmelites at the Brevard Music Center Janiec Opera Company; Hansel in Hansel and Gretel with the New York Lyric Opera Theater; and Flower Girl in The Marriage of Figaro with Opera on the Avalon. In March, she will sing Lady Meresvale/Mistress Revels in HGO’s world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players.

KEITH JAMESON
Gamekeeper
For information about Keith Jameson, please see p. 44.

MANE GALOYAN (ARMENIA)
Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Bahr/ Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson Fellow Soprano—Kitchen Girl
First-year HGO Studio artist Mane Galoyan is making her HGO debut. Last summer, she won third place in the women’s voice division of the prestigious International Tchaikovsky Competition only months after winning first prize in HGO’s 2015 Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias. She has won a number of other prestigious awards, including a first prize in the Hans Gabor Belvedere Competition in Dusseldorf, Germany, and first prize in the 7th Bibigul Tulegenova International Singing Competition in Kazakhstan. She participated in HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy in 2013. Later this season at HGO, she will sing the leading role of Margaret Hughes in the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players, Forest Bird in Siegfried, and Lucy in the world premiere of David Hanlon and Stephanie Fleischmann’s The Root of the Wind Is Water. This summer, she will sing Smorfiosa in Gassmann’s L’opera seria with Wolf Trap Opera.

CHRIS BOZEGA (UNITED STATES)
Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow Tenor—Hunter
For information about Chris Bozeka, please see p. 44.
I really appreciate all the Guild does for artists coming to Houston. It’s a group of volunteers who work to make artists feel welcome.”

Ana María Martínez, soprano, HGO Studio Alum
Unsung Heroes

PUTTING THE “SPECIAL” IN SPECIAL EVENTS
SCOTT IPSEN

BY PERRYN LEECH
HGO MANAGING DIRECTOR
Houston Grand Opera’s special events have an extremely high profile and are among the most eagerly anticipated on the city’s annual social calendar. Over the last 60 years, they have been chaired by many of Houston’s most recognized leaders and social figures—not to mention that the guest lists always include a who’s who of significant Houstonians. There is a huge amount of pressure on Scott Ipsen, director of special events since 2012, to make HGO’s events classy and fresh year after year.

Were you interested in music at school?

I have always enjoyed music, but was never cut out to be a performer of music. My mom made me take piano lessons (that I hated) and I was really only interested at the time in percussion. I played percussion in our junior high school band, which I enjoyed, but it was also during this time I found how much I really enjoyed playing golf—a passion that I got from my dad. By the time I was in high school I made the golf team, which was a lot of fun but also very intense, so I chose to focus on golf.

If you were playing team golf in high school then I am sure the idea of playing in college was high in your thoughts.

Yes, I even remember having aspirations to take the PGA tour by storm. Dream big, right? The reality, however, is that I had played so much golf and in such a high-pressure environment that even by my junior year in high school I was experiencing some burnout. Golf had stopped being fun. I had always been a science guy, so I decided I was going to study biomedical science with the goal of going into veterinary medicine. After completing my bachelor’s degree in biomedical science, I applied to the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine but didn’t get accepted into the program and had to reapply the following year. While in college, I worked for a local veterinary hospital and I realized that marketing experience would be incredibly useful in a future career in pharmaceuticals or medicine. So, I then pursued a master’s degree in marketing rather than reapplying to veterinary school.

I am struggling to see how you got from being a science and marketing nerd to working for HGO! What happened next?

Well, when I left college in 2004, the job market was challenging to say the least! Houston was still affected by Enron’s 2001 bankruptcy, so I was more open to trying a career in anything I could get. Knowing I had studied marketing in college, a great friend of mine suggested I try an internship at a very small company called The Wright Touch that did corporate events and branding work. It was there that I first met Guyla Pircher, who was to become very important in my future. I was hired full-time and she and I had a lot of fun—basically we...
would dream up crazy ideas and then develop them into events! One of the most memorable was working on the owners’ party during the 2004 MLB All-Star game at Minute Maid Park.

**Did Guyla then come to HGO and bring you with her?**

Not quite. It came as a surprise to me, but Guyla decided to leave to work for a private family—an opportunity she thought was too good to miss. By this time we had really developed a great working partnership in which we both brought different, complementary skills to our shared projects. I was very happy for Guyla but was really going to miss working with her.

**So what happened that allowed the two of you to get your working partnership back together?**

Anthony Freud arrived at HGO [as general director in 2006] and one of his first items of business was to get the Development Department working in a more cohesive and effective way. Guyla was promoted to run special events and she called and offered me the position of associate director of special events. I was thrilled to be working together again and we set out to elevate the status of HGO’s annual special events. We knew we could not be too far “out there” in our event concepts, but raising the bar and creating incredibly stylish and classy events was a fairly easy way to set them apart from the hundreds of events that happen in Houston every year. The fantastic Denise Simon joined our team shortly after as the special events operations manager, and she and I hit it off immediately. Guyla and I made a good team—she had the big-picture vision and guided the event chairs, and I worked with Denise to put all the moving parts together to make it all happen.

I am not sure that most people have any idea how hard you have to work to make events look easy!

I am not sure I would call it that! There are definitely a lot of details to consider from theme and décor to choosing a menu and selecting the right entertainment. It is all about mapping out a timeline that makes sense and allows me to get everything done so that our events are as beautiful and cost effective as possible.

**I know Guyla was also looking out for you as well.**

Definitely—she was very supportive and always had my back. She also thought of herself as a matchmaker and had tried setting me up with a member of our young professionals group but it wasn’t the right fit for me! It was through that friendship, however, that I met my wife, Larissa, at an Opera event. It was all very simple and spontaneous. We got married very quickly after that.

I can hear as you talk that you and Guyla were clearly very close and obviously made an incredible team. Her illness must have been very hard for you.

It was in some ways, but Guyla was also very private and didn’t want it to be widely known she was struggling with her health. The Opera Ball chair that year was Cynthia Petrello, and she was not even aware of the extent of Guyla’s illness until the night of the Ball. Guyla was there to get the evening started but just didn’t have the physical strength to stay the whole night. It took an amazing strength of will to come at all, and was the perfect example of what made Guyla so special. Even as her illness significantly progressed, she garnered the physical strength to get to the Wortham to make sure the event was going well. It was always about the success of the event and the happiness of the chair—she never made it about herself.

She was indeed an amazing woman. After she passed away, you were asked to step up and take over the department. It is always hard when you go from being a team member to running the show—how long did it take for you to settle into the new role?
As soon as I do, I will let you know! It was both a huge leap for me and yet also seemed very do-able, as I had transitioned into much of the job while Guyla was ill. Every event we do is still a learning experience for me, and since we do so many events each season, I am able to constantly implement ideas or changes that will positively impact our finished product. I have also had amazing support from my team and the company, but especially from the wonderful ladies of the Special Events Committee, which has really helped. The members of the committee have gone out of their way to make sure I am included in special occasions and invited to events around the city, and I have been able to develop great relationships and get to know them all much better.

You will soon celebrate your ten-year anniversary at HGO. Do you enjoy the job in spite of the high pressure to make sure every event is more successful than those you have done before?

Most of the time it is great and I really enjoy what I do. I get to work with some wonderfully talented chairs and I use other people's money to do wild and crazy things. When I stand back in those few moments before any of the patrons arrive and everything is ready for an event, I am always proud of what we have accomplished. I know that I am being watched and I think Guyla is looking down and letting me know what she would have done differently!
Happy New Year from the HGO Studio! The Studio artists are hard at work in our winter main-stage productions. In this production of The Marriage of Figaro, you’ll see Pureum Jo (Barbarina), Federico De Michilis (Antonio), and Chris Bozeka (Don Curzio). In addition to those artists appearing in the main-stage cast, Studio artists are studying the following roles with the help of HGO’s music staff and Studio pianist/coaches Geoffrey Loff and Kirill Kuzmin: Countess (D’Ana Lombard), Susanna (Pureum Jo and Mane Galoyan), Count (Ben Edquist), Figaro (Federico De Michilis), and Cherubino (Sofia Selowsky and Megan Samarin). These young singers have worked hard to learn, memorize, and perfect these roles. They’re fully prepared to jump in, should the need arise—but more importantly, they’ve learned major roles that they’re likely to sing many times over the course of their careers. Rusalka has kept us busy, too: the three Wood Nymphs, Hunter, and Kitchen Girl are all sung by artists from the HGO Studio, and pianist/coach Sahar Nouri has assisted in musical preparation.

Following right on the heels of Rusalka and Figaro is an especially exciting project for the Studio: the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s Prince of Players. Seven principal roles, including the leading roles of Edward Kynaston (Ben Edquist) and Margaret Hughes (Mane Galoyan) will be sung by HGO Studio artists. This project represents an important part of the HGO Studio’s present and past, as composer Carlisle Floyd was one of the Studio’s founders and continues as an artistic advisor to the Studio.

In early February, approximately 18 young singers will make their way to Houston for the semifinal and final rounds of the Eleanor McCollium Competition for Young Singers, culminating in our annual Concert of Arias on February 4. We’re especially honored this year to have two distinguished Studio alumni joining us as guest judges: baritone Joshua Hopkins and soprano Heidi Stober (currently performing as the Count and Susanna in The Marriage of Figaro). Joshua and Heidi have established major careers since their time in the Studio, singing leading roles in the world’s best opera houses, and returning frequently to HGO. We’re proud of their accomplishments, and couldn’t ask for better models for our current and future Studio artists. I hope you’ll join us on February 4 to be among the first to meet our future stars.

Brian Speck
Director, HGO Studio

Kirill Kuzmin
pianist/coach
Joan Hacken
Bitar, M.D./Bill and Melinda Brunger Fellow

Sahar Nouri
pianist/coach
Audrey Jones Beck
Endowed Fund/John M. O’Quinn Foundation Endowed Fund Fellow

Megan Samarin
mezzo-soprano
Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow

D’Ana Lombard
soprano
Lynne Murray Sr. Educational Foundation Fellow

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

Chris Bozeka
tenor
Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow

Geoffrey Loff
pianist/coach
Lynn Guggolz/Ms. Marianne Kah Fellow

Sofia Selowsky
mezzo-soprano
Mr. and Mrs. James W. Crownover Fellow

Pureum Jo
soprano
Mr. Joseph Matulevich and Ms. Sasha Davis/ Nancy and Ted Haywood Fellow

Federico De Michilis
bass-baritone
Beth Madison Fellow

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

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HGO Studio Faculty & Staff

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Bradley Moore, Music Director
Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Alkek Chair
Jeremy Johnson, Studio Administrator
Carlisle Floyd, Artistic Advisor
Stephen King, Director of Vocal Instruction
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SAVE THE DATES

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

RECATALS AT RIENZI
Fri. MAR. 18 | Sun. MAR. 20, 2016
Th. MAY 5 | Sun. MAY 8, 2016
Recitals are held at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 1406 Kirby Dr. Thursday or Friday recitals begin at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday recitals are held at 5 p.m. Come 45 minutes before the recital begins for a walk-through tour of Rienzi and a wine reception. Tickets, which include valet parking and the reception, are available through HGO.org or 713-228-OPERA (6737).

CONCERT OF ARIS
FEB. 4, 2016
Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center
Concert of Arias—the final round of the Eleanor McNeill Competition for Young Singers—is the single most important fundraiser for the HGO Studio. The evening begins with a 6 p.m. champagne reception, followed by the competition at 7 p.m. Celebration Dinner to follow in the Grand Foyer. For information, contact Scott Ipsen at 713-546-0242 or sipsen@hgo.org.

HGO Studio Artists 2015–16

Chris Bozeka, tenor
Dr. Ellen R. Gritz and Milton D. Rosenau Jr. Fellow
Federico De Micheli, bass-baritone
Beth Madison Fellow
Ben Edquist, baritone
Mr. and Mrs. Harlan C. Stai, Terrell Tone Owen Memorial Endowed Fund at the Community Foundation of Abilene Endowed Fellow
Mane Galoyan, soprano
Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Bahr/
Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Nickson Fellow

Pureum Jo, soprano
Mr. Joseph Matulevich and Ms. Sasha Davis/Nancy and Ted Haywood Fellow
Kirill Kuzmin, pianist/coach
Joan Hacken Bitar, M.D./Bill and Melinda Brunger Fellow
Geoffrey Lott, pianist/coach
Lynn Guggolz/Ms. Marianne Kah Fellow
D’Ana Lombard, soprano
Lynne Murray Sr. Educational Foundation Fellow

Sahar Nouri, pianist/coach
Audrey Jones Beck Endowed Fund/John M. O’Quinn Foundation Endowed Fund Fellow
Megan Samarin, mezzo-soprano
Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow
Sofia Selowsky, mezzo-soprano
Mr. and Mrs. James W. Crownover Fellow
Yongzhao Yu, tenor
Albert and Anne Chao/Carolyn J. Levy Fellow

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

UNFORGETTABLE FIRST OPERA

Do you remember your first opera? This year, over 4,000 students saw their first opera at the Wortham Theater Center. This year’s High School Night performance, which is the same as a regular performance, complete with printed tickets, featured Puccini’s dramatic masterpiece Tosca. Students thrilled to the love duets sung by Tosca and Cavaradossi (Kelly Kaduce and Chad Shelton), and shuddered as Scarpia, sung by Weston Hurt, made his dastardly intentions clear in “Va, Tosca.” What the students didn’t know at the time is that Weston got his start in music right here in the Houston area, growing up in Spring. Now enjoying an international career, Weston was thrilled to perform for a hometown audience, which got a special treat when Weston joined HGO Dramaturg Paul Hopper onstage at intermission for an interview and talkback with the audience.

Elementary and middle-school students attended three sold-out Student Matinee performances of Rachel Portman and Nicholas Wright’s The Little Prince, based on the poignant family-friendly story by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. This opera is unusual in that it features a boy soprano in the title role, and in this production the role of the Little Prince was shared by two talented Houston boys, Andy Jones and Cohle H. Smith. In addition, the HGO Children’s Chorus, directed by Karen Reeves, is integral to the storytelling. During intermission, the students watched the crew prepare for Act II and enjoyed interviews with HGO Technical and Production Director David Feheley as well as members of the HGO Children’s Chorus.

These performances, so vital in nurturing an appreciation for the arts in young children and teenagers, would not be possible without generous gifts from these sponsors. HGO is deeply grateful for their support.

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**OPERA TO GO! PREMIERES**
**THE PUFFED-UP PRIMA DONNA**

Opera to Go! proudly premieres Houston Grand Opera’s 58th new work this January—Mark Buller and Charles Anthony Silvestri’s *The Puffed-Up Prima Donna*. This comedy explores how collaboration can counteract bullying through the story about a fictitious group of opera singers struggling with artistic differences. As the troupe prepares for a palace wedding, will the overbearing diva ruin everything, or is she simply misunderstood? Please join us for FREE performances at the historic Heinen Theatre January 28, 29, and 30, at 9:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. daily. *The Puffed-Up Prima Donna* is also available for touring to schools, libraries, and community centers through May 20, 2016.

For more information, visit hgo.org/operatogo or call 713-546-0231.

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**TAKE A (SPRING) BREAK WITH HGOCO**

Looking for high quality Spring Break activities for your children? HGOCO is delighted to return to Discovery Green March 16–18 for singing, dancing, and storytelling activities that will keep your kids engaged. Join us for First Songs (for newborn to preschool-age children and their caregivers) and Storybook Opera (Pre-K–2 grade) between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. daily. As always, activities at Discovery Green are FREE and fun for the whole family. Please call 713-546-0231 for more information.

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Image: Photo by Lynn Lane
**Supporter Spotlights**

**BRISTOW GROUP**

HGO is pleased to welcome Bristow Group as a new corporate supporter and member of the HGO Founders Council for Artistic Excellence. Bristow is the leading provider of helicopter services to the worldwide offshore energy industry. The company has major operations in the North Sea, Nigeria, the U.S. Gulf of Mexico, and in most of the other major offshore oil and gas producing regions of the world, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Russia, and Trinidad. Bristow also provides search and rescue services globally and operates Bristow Academy, one of the nation's leading helicopter flight training schools.

President and CEO Jonathan Baliff serves as HGO's trustee on behalf of Bristow Group. Jonathan has an M.S. in foreign service from Georgetown University and a B.S. in aerospace engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology. Jonathan also served on active duty in the U.S. Air Force for eight years, retiring with the rank of Captain. Barbara, his wife of 21 years, also served in the Air Force, and the couple has three children.

We warmly welcome longtime opera fans Jonathan and Barbara into the HGO family and we look forward to working with Bristow Group this season.

**CAREY JORDAN**

We warmly welcome Carey Jordan as one of our newest HGO trustees. Carey’s journey with opera began nearly a decade ago with a performance of *Don Giovanni* at Houston Grand Opera. Since then, her 16-year-old daughter Blake’s aspiration to become an opera singer has deepened Carey’s passion for the art form and her connection to HGO.

Carey is a partner in the law firm of McDermott Will & Emery LLP, focusing her practice on intellectual property in the chemical, energy, and materials science areas. Carey received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Clemson University and her law degree from University of Houston Law Center, all *magna cum laude*. Her husband Brian Simmons is also an attorney, with Ahmad, Zavitsanos, Anipakos, Alavi and Mensing (AZA), focusing on intellectual property matters.

**MICHELLE BEALE**

Houston Grand Opera is thrilled to have Michelle Beale as a member of the HGO Board of Directors. Michelle and her husband, Dick Anderson, are longtime members of the HGO family. Michelle has subscribed to HGO since 1984 and has been a trustee since 1987. She currently serves on both the Development and the HGO Studio Committees and chairs HGO’s Laureate Society Council.

Michelle’s commitment to developing young artists has led her to generously underwrite many HGO Studio singers over the years. She and her husband currently underwrite HGO Studio mezzo-soprano Megan Samarin and previously supported Andrea Carroll, Brendan Tuohy, Faith Sherman, and Jennifer Root.

Michelle is retired from The Coca-Cola Company, where she served as senior vice president of human resources, public affairs, and administration. She received her bachelor's and juris doctor degrees from the University of Tulsa. She also holds a master's degree in international relations from the University of Karachi in Pakistan. In addition to her great passion for opera and fishing, Michelle is an active board member with several other organizations, including the Nature Conservancy, the Marine Science Institute at Port Aransas, Texas, and the University of Tulsa.
OPENING NIGHT DINNER

On October 23, Houston Grand Opera opened its 61st season with an elegant black-tie dinner on Fish Plaza following a riveting performance of Puccini’s *Tosca*. Chaired by Susan and Ward Pennebaker and honoring the legacy of the late Roy H. Cullen, the celebration featured a sumptuous three-course meal by Tony’s Catering and crimson décor by The Events Company.
THE LITTLE PRINCE CAST PARTY
Cast, creative team members, and crew of The Little Prince mingled with HGO Patrons at the opening night cast party on December 4. This year marks the third time HGO has presented Oscar winner Rachel Portman's crowd-pleasing opera—an HGO commission that premiered here in 2003—based on the beloved book by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.
EUGENE ONEGIN CAST PARTY
HGO Patrons toasted the cast and crew of Eugene Onegin onstage in the Cullen Theater following the opening performance on October 30. Hosted by Robin Angly and Miles Smith, Irene Bourke and Joseph Waiter, Anna Dean, Lynn Guggolz, and Gary Hollingsworth and Ken Hyde, guests nibbled on Russian-themed hors d’oeuvres and sipped Blue Russians.

TICKETS NOW ON SALE
The Santa Fe Desert Chorale presents
Houston Grand Opera’s Countess in Le nozze di Figaro
Ailyn Pérez and Gary Matthewman
In Recital
Tuesday, March 29, 2016 at 6pm
The Lensic Performing Arts Center, Santa Fe

“A beautiful woman who commands the stage” and “a major soprano”
—The New York Times

“Gary Matthewman...a tactful and sensitive accompanist...”
—Classicalsource.com

The winner of both the 2012 Richard Tucker Award and the 15th annual Plácido Domingo Award, Ailyn Pérez has performed leading roles at major opera houses worldwide, including: the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, The Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Dallas Opera.

For information on the concert and to arrange premiere seats, please contact our concierge at (505) 988-2282. All other tickets may be purchased beginning on January 4, 2016 at The Lensic Box Office by calling 505-988-1234 or online at www.ticketsantafe.org.
CORPORATE COUNCIL
On Wednesday, October 14, some 70 members of the HGO Corporate Council—a group of distinguished Houston business leaders whose companies generously support the Opera—and their invited guests attended a private reception, a VIP backstage tour hosted by Managing Director Perryn Leech, and an elegant dinner in the Founders Salon. Following the dinner, the guests had the opportunity to sit in on part of a rehearsal for *Tosca*.

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. Also visit HGO.org/LaureateSociety.
STUDIO SHOWCASE
Following the annual Studio Showcase on September 10, guests celebrated the 2015–16 HGO Studio artists at a post-performance dessert reception hosted by Jackson and Company and members of the HGO Studio Committee.
LAUREATE SOCIETY
As recognition for including Houston Grand Opera in their estate plans, members of the Laureate Society were treated to a special performance on October 11 at The Wynden. HGO Studio alumnus Norman Reinhardt and current HGO Studio pianist Kirill Kuzmin entertained guests with a wonderful selection of gems from the lyric tenor repertoire, ranging from Tamino’s aria from Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* to “Maria” from Bernstein’s *West Side Story*.

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, 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 main-stage productions, including this season’s *Tosca* and *Rusalka*.

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

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

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

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

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

**CONOCOPHILLIPS**  
For over thirty years, ConocoPhillips has supported various programs at HGO, from special events to main-stage productions, including the 2015–16 season-opening production, Puccini’s *Tosca*. 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 chairman of the HGO Endowment Board.
Bobbie-Vee and Gerald Cooney
Bobbie-Vee and Jerry have been HGO subscribers since 1979 and have generously supported HGO productions of the most beloved classics of the Italian repertoire, including Aida, La bohème, Tosca, and Madame Butterfly. The Cooneys also supported HGO’s innovative commission Cruzar la Cara de la Luna (2010, 2013), the world’s first mariachi opera. They have been active supporters of all HGO special events for many years, from the Opening Night Dinner, which Bobbie-Vee chaired in 2004, to Concert of Arias, which the couple chaired together in 2014. HGO is honored to have Bobbie-Vee serve on the board of directors.

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

The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts
The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts has been a lead underwriter of HGO’s main-stage season for nearly 30 years. The Trust was established from assets of The Cullen Foundation to specifically benefit Texas performing arts institutions, particularly those within the Greater Houston area. In recent years, The Cullen Trust has provided lead support for memorable productions of Carmen, A Christmas Carol, and the 2015–16 production of The Little Prince.

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

Houston Grand Opera 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. This season, HGO is thrilled to have HGOE as the premier guarantor of Siegfried.

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 2.4 million attendees in 2015.

Houston Methodist
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 main-stage productions such as Aida (2013–14), The Magic Flute (2014–15), and this season’s The Marriage of Figaro. HGO is fortunate to have Dr. C. Richard Stasney, founder of CPAM, 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 main-stage season since 1980. Geraldine Davis Humphreys (d. 1961), a member of the pioneer Hardin family of Liberty, Texas, bequeathed her estate to the Humphreys Foundation, which was formally established in 1959. The Foundation provides support for performing arts in Texas and college scholarship funding for students in the arts. Linda Bertman, Louis Paine, and Robert Wall serve as trustees of the Humphreys Foundation. In recent years, the Foundation’s generous support has helped make possible unforgettable main-stage productions such as last season’s Così fan tutte and 2014’s Rigoletto.

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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 are underwriters for HGO’s Ring cycle. He is also a special events sponsor, 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, main-stage productions, special events, and especially HGOco, the Opera’s innovative education and community collaboration initiative.
Guarantor of Wagner’s Ring construction industry. Medistar joined the HGO family as a Grand Guarantor of Wagner’s Ring cycle (2014–17).

Claire and Joe have subscribed to HGO for many seasons and are members of HGO’s Founders Council for Artistic Excellence. Claire recently joined the HGO Board of Directors and serves on 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.

This season marks Beth’s 21st as an HGO subscriber. HGO has had the honor of her support since 2004. Past chair of the HGO Board of Directors, she currently serves on the Executive, Finance, and HGO Studio Committees, and is an active member of HGO’s Founders Council. Beth generously supports the HGO Studio, special events and, last season, Die Walküre. Beth has been inducted into the Greater Houston Women’s Hall of Fame and serves on the University of Houston System Board of Regents.

Janice and 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).

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

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

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

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

Brucie and Andy have been a treasured part of the Opera family for more than 20 years. Subscribers since the 1998–99 season, Brucie and Andy are members of HGO’s Founders Council for Artistic Excellence. Brucie has served on the HGO Board of Directors since 2002. Sara is a co-founder of the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, where she currently serves on the board. Bill is a co-founder of the Kinder Morgan companies and the retired vice chairman and president of Kinder Morgan, Inc., and Kinder Morgan Energy Partners, LP. The Morgans support HGO’s special events and main-stage productions, including HGO’s new holiday opera series, with It’s a Wonderful Life in the 2016–17 season. HGO is thrilled to have Sara serve on its board of directors and as a member and past chair of the HGOco Committee.

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 member of the HGO Board of Directors and serves on the Special Events and Governance Committees. She was the inaugural chair of the HGOco Committee and generously supports HGOco initiatives as a guarantor.
faces at HGO performances, recitals, and events. From donating to contemporary. Owners Tony Bradfield and Kevin Black are familiar and collectible estate jewelry with styles ranging from antique to vintage Tenenbaum has been Houston's premier destination for unique, rare, and special events. The Stais have also sponsored HGO Studio, the HGO Endowment, and main-stage productions, including this season’s Rusalka. 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, to the company, both as an individual donor and through her family’s foundation. She has endowed the Margaret Alkek Williams Chair, held by HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers, and is a member of HGO’s Laureate Society. A valued member of the HGO Board of Directors, Margaret was the honoree of the 2009 Opera Ball and chairman of the 2014 Ball.

The Wortham Foundation, Inc.
In the 1980s, the Wortham Foundation contributed $20 million to lead the capital campaign for the Wortham Theater Center, guided by businessman Gus S. Wortham’s early recognition of the vital role of the arts in making Houston an appealing place to live and work. During their lifetimes, Gus and his wife, Lyndall, were dedicated to improving the lives of Houstonians. The Foundation continues to support the Opera through the Wortham Foundation Permanent Endowment and generous annual operating support.

Cynthia and Anthony Petrello
Cynthia and Tony are deeply committed to improving the lives of Houstonians through their support of health care and the arts. Tony is the chief executive officer of Nabors Industries, the world’s largest land-based drilling contractor. Cynthia, a community leader, is honored to count Schlumberger among its most dedicated corporate supporters. Dan Domeracki, vice president of government and industry relations, serves on the HGO Board of Directors.

Dian and Harlan Stai
Harlan, a member of the HGO Board of Directors, and Dian are charter members of HGO’s Founders Council for Artistic Excellence, and their leadership support includes main-stage productions, the HGO Studio, the HGO Endowment, and special events. The Stais have also sponsored HGO Studio 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 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 main-stage opera season and special events, the Tenenbaum team helps HGO sparkle and shine.

Schlumberger
Schlumberger, Ltd., is a leading corporate contributor to HGO, supporting the main stage and a wide range of special projects over nearly 20 years. Schlumberger’s leadership gift was integral to launching HGO’s ongoing affordability program, the NEXUS Initiative, in 2007—since then, NEXUS has made great opera accessible to more than 200,000 people. HGO is grateful for the Petrellos’ support of HGOco and the main stage, underwriting this season’s Prince of Players. The Petrellos also support HGOco programs for children, including the Student Performance Series and Opera to Go!

Oxy
Oxy is honored to count Oxy among its newest corporate supporters. Oxy is an international oil and gas exploration and production company with operations in the United States, Middle East, and Latin America. HGO is grateful for Oxy’s leadership support of HGOco, the Opera’s innovative education and community collaboration initiative that brings performances to over 100,000 students, families, and teachers each season. HGO is thrilled to have Marcia Backus, a long-term HGO supporter and senior vice president and general counsel at Oxy, serve on the HGO Board of Directors.

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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.

**PLATINUM CIRCLE—$50,000 OR MORE**
- Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson
- Mr. Tony Bradfield and Mr. Kevin Black
- Mr. and Mrs. Daniel A. Breen
- Zane and Brady Carruth
- Donna Josey Chapman and Max Chapman
- Louise Chapman
- Mr. and Mrs. James W. Crownover
- Mr. and Mrs. Frank J. Hevrdejs
- Alfred W. Lasher III
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- Will L. McLendon
- Mr. and Mrs. D. Bradley McWilliams
- Miss Catherine Jane Merchant
- Glen A. Rosenbaum
- Dr. Jack A. Roth and Dr. Elizabeth Grimm
- Bill and Melinda Brungren
- Dr. and Mrs. William T. Butler
- Janet Langford Carrig
- The Robert and Jane Cizik Foundation
- Mr. and Mrs. Randy Crath
- Gislar and Victoria Donnenberg
- Sandy and Lee Godfrey
- Mrs. William H. Guggolz, Jr.
- Dr. and Mrs. Theodore J. Haywood
- Lee M. Huber
- Ms. Marianne Kah
- Perryn and Caroline Leech
- Mr. Joseph Matulevich and Ms. Sasha Davis
- Radoff Family
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- Mr. Georgios Varsamis
- Mr. William V. Walker
- Mr. and Mrs. David S. Wolff

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- Mr. and Mrs. James M. Vaughn Jr.
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**GOLDEN CIRCLE—$25,000 OR MORE**
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- Mr. Georgios Varsamis
- Mr. William V. Walker
- Mr. and Mrs. David S. Wolff

**BRONZE CIRCLE—$10,000 OR MORE**
- Mr. Edward H. Andrews III
- The Honorable Mary E. Bacon
- Kathryn and David Berg
- Dr. Michael and Susan Bloome
- Ms. Adrienne Bond
- Walt and Nancy Bratic
- Mr. Robert J. Bruni
- Dr. Janet and Mr. Charles Bruner
- Mr. Ralph Burch
- Mrs. Mary H. Cain
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- Mr. Joseph L. Campbell
- Marjorie H. Capshaw
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CALENDAR 2015–16

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JANUARY

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

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

28, 29, 30
• HGOco and Opera to Go! present world premiere performances of Mark Buller and Charles Anthony Silvestri’s The Puffed-Up Prima Donna. Heinen Theatre at Houston Community College, central campus, 9:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. daily. The Puffed-Up Prima Donna tours from Jan. 25 through May 20. Book a performance at HGO.org/OperaToGo or by calling 713-546-0231.

29, 31, FEB. 6, 9, 12
• Performances of Dvořák’s Rusalka. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the January 29 performance only.

31
• Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about Rusalka immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

FEBRUARY

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

MARCH

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

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

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

APRIL

2
• Spring Event: the HGO Guild holds its annual fundraiser at the Houston Racquet Club, 10708 Memorial Dr. 6:30 p.m. Contact Gerry Aitken at 281-242-4466 for information.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MAY

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

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

13
• HGOco presents world premiere performance of David Hanlon and Stephanie Fleischmann’s The Root of the Wind Is Water. Cullen Theater. For information, visit HGO.org/root.

15
• HGOco presents the High School Voice Studio Graduation Recital, Duncan Recital Hall, Rice University, 6 p.m. Free.
• HGOco presents David Hanlon and Stephanie Fleischmann’s The Root of the Wind Is Water. The Grand 1894 Opera House in Galveston. For information, visit HGO.org/root.
SINGLE TICKETS FOR HGO’S 2015–16 SEASON ARE AVAILABLE. CALL 713-228-OPERA (6737) OR 800-62-OPERA (800-626-7372), OR ORDER ONLINE AT HGO.ORG.

Carlisle Floyd

PRINCE OF PLAYERS

Non-subscription WORLD PREMIERE

Mar. 5 | 11 | 13m

Edward Kynaston
Ben Edquist †
Margaret Hughes
Mane Galoyan †
Charles II
Chad Shelton ‡

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

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

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Patrick Summers
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Director
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Composer Carlisle Floyd is the Lynn Wyatt Great Artist 2015–16.

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Grand Underwriter—Lynn Wyatt

Wagner

SIEGFRIED

Apr. 16 | 20 | 23 | 28 | May 1m

Siegfried
Jay Hunter Morris Wanderer
Iain Paterson Brünnhilde
Christine Goerke Mime
Rodell Rosel

Alberich
Christopher Purves
Erda
Meredith Arwady
Fafner
Andrea Silvestrelli

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra

Conductor
Patrick Summers
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Production
La Fura dels Baus

Director
Carlus Padrissa
Set Designer
Roland Olsbetr

Costume Designer
Chu Uroz
Lighting Designer
Peter van Praet
Projection Designer
Franc Aleu
Movement Director/
Associate Director
Esteban Muñoz

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Rodgers and Hammerstein

CAROUSEL

Apr. 22 | 24m | 27 | 29 | 30 | May 6 | 7

Billy Bigelow
Duncan Rock *
Julie Jordan
Andrea Carroll ‡
Carrie Pipperidge
Lauren Snouffer ‡
Nettie Fowler
Stephanie Blythe*

Enoch Snow
Alexander Lewis *
Mrs. Mullin
Helen Anker *
Jigger Craigin
Ben Edquist †

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Conductor/
Chorus Master
Richard Bado *

Chorus Master Chair

Director/
Choreographer
Rob Ashford
Set Designer
Paolo Ventura *
Costume Designer
Catherine Zuber

Original Lighting Designer
Neil Austin
Sound Designer
Andrew Harper
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Lee Newby *
Associate Choreographer
Sarah O’Gleby

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† Houston Grand Opera Studio artist
‡ Former Houston Grand Opera Studio artist
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Megan, Properties Design Director *
Liz Petley, Assistant Stage Manager
Albert Pike, Master Electrician *
Mercedes Ramirez, Draper *
Evelyn Rossow, Assistant Stage Manager
Marla Luisa Salinas, Costume Technician
Logan Schoenbaechler, Assistant Technical Director
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Christopher Staub, Stage Manager/ Assistant Stage Manager
Paul Le Tran, Costume Technician
Myrna Vallejo, Costume Shop Supervisor *
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Annie Wheeler, Stage Manager/ Assistant Stage Manager

* denotes 10 or more years of service

WINTER 2016
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Want to brush up on the opera before you attend? Need directions to the theater? This information and much more is available on our website where you can also purchase tickets and make a donation: www.houstongrandopera.org

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vienna is one of the few important houses that still has an ensemble to which one can belong. I like both the city and the house, so I am glad I can be based there artistically and personally, even though I don’t spend as much time there as I used to.

Are you often able to perform with your wife?

We used to sing together all the time (Figaro-Susanna, Giovanni-Zerlina, Guglielmo-Despina, Publio-Servilia, Papageno-Papagena, Argante-Almirena, etc.). The less I sing in Prague, though, the less we get to sing together, because she is based in the ensemble of the National Theatre. The last time we met on an operatic stage was last season, when we did *The Elixir of Love* (Dulcamara-Adina) together. I wanted to be part of those performances because they were the first ones after my wife’s maternity leave. Since then, we have done some concerts together and we are planning one in December as well.

We try to spend as much time together as possible, but we need to adjust our schedule to my wife’s projects.

You were very young when you made your professional debut—19, I think? Why do you think you were ready for a professional debut at such an early age?

I am not sure I was completely ready, but you have to go with the flow. The offers started coming and I carefully selected those that couldn’t harm me vocally. When I see and hear my early recordings, I can tell I wasn’t an accomplished artist—and don’t think I am one yet, anyway—but you have to begin somehow and it is easier to get experience when you are young. You can’t develop unless you spend a fair amount of time on stage. For example, my first Don Giovanni at 21 was ridiculous from my point of view today, but it fit the circumstances very well and if I hadn’t done that, I surely wouldn’t have been able to sing it in Vienna at the age of 26.

Are there any Czech roles you are especially anxious to do?

In 2014, I made a CD of Czech repertoire, but I rarely perform it onstage. I am a huge fan of Bedřich Smetana. I would love to perform some of his parts, but his operas are not often played abroad and I think I still have time to get into this repertoire anyway. Hopefully roles such as Kalina from *The Secret*, Přemysl from *Libuše*, or King Vladislav from *Dalibor* will appear on my CV.

When you travel to a new city, is there any activity you seek out to make yourself feel more at home?

My life so far has shaped me in a way that I don’t really care where I am. It is much more important to me what people I am around. If I have my family around, I feel at home. Normally I look for a nice area to go for a run and a nice restaurant.

How will you celebrate the holidays this year?

With family—sadly, only very briefly, since I fly to Houston on December 25, but we celebrate Christmas on the evening of the 24th in Prague, so we are fine. The only tradition I had to cancel was my regular Czech Christmas Mass concert on the 25th, which I sang for over 10 years. I must say, I am a little sad about that.
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