A percentage of every Opera Collection purchase will be donated back to HGO
but every opera this season is either being seen at HGO for the first time—Handel’s *Saul*, Donizetti’s *La favorite*, and the world premiere of Javier Martínez and Leonard Foglia’s *El Milagro del Recuerdo/The Miracle of Remembering*—or is a brand-new production of a more familiar opera. We’ll give you a brief overview here, but you’ll find out about our spectacular artists and many more details throughout this season preview issue of *Opera Cues*.

We return to our Family and Holiday Opera Series with *El Milagro del Recuerdo/The Miracle of Remembering*, the prequel to HGO’s beloved commission *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*. *El Milagro* brings back some of *Cruzar*’s major characters and some of the original performers for a family-friendly holiday treat.

*Saul* is inspired by the events of the first book of Samuel in the Bible, homing in on the relationship of Israel’s King Saul with the shepherd David, who would eventually succeed him. This production by Barrie Kosky will live with you forever.

*La favorite*, one of the most popular operas of its time, fell out of the repertoire for a while because it is so difficult to sing, and thus difficult to cast. It is one of Donizetti’s finest works and a perfect vehicle for Jamie Barton, who trained in our Studio and is now recognized as one of the most important mezzo-sopranos in the world.

Verdi’s *Rigoletto* and *Aida*, and Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*—our more familiar operas of the season—will be seen in visionary new stagings. The trick of reimagining an opera classic is to keep its spirit intact but its presentation fresh, and each of these productions does just that.

And then there’s Richard Strauss’s *Salome*, the very first opera HGO ever presented, an unconventional choice that has set the tone for the company ever since. *Salome* is pure power—don’t miss the chance to hear it performed by our superlative cast with Eun Sun Kim in her first appearance as HGO’s principal guest conductor.

In addition to the season’s operas, you will not want to miss *In War & Peace—Harmony Through Music*, a one-night-only concert event conceived and performed by our own Joyce DiDonato. The November 6 event will mark the star mezzo’s first performance at HGO since she helped us celebrate our 60th anniversary in 2015.

We can’t wait to see you at the Wortham in 2019–20!
For information on all Houston Grand Opera productions and events, or for a complimentary season brochure, please email the Customer Care Center at customercare@hgo.org or telephone 713-228-6737.

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**Star-Cross’d Web Series Releases New Episode**

In “NOW,” episode two of HGO’s Telly Award-winning opera web series, composer Avner Dorman and librettist/film director John Grimmet bring us a mesmerizing story about how the worlds of two couples are turned upside down when a partner in each couple undergoes a gender transition. Based on true events from the lives of real-life Houstonians, “NOW” explores losing what you thought you had and gaining something you could never imagine. The film short stars Lucia Lucas, a transgender opera singer who recently made her American debut at Tulsa Opera in the title role of *Don Giovanni*. To watch this and the pilot episode, “Boundless,” a Bronze Winner at the 2019 Telly Awards, visit HGO.org/star-crossd.

**Arturo Chacón-Cruz Receives Plácido Domingo Award**

HGO Studio alumnus Arturo Chacón-Cruz has received the Plácido Domingo Award at LA Opera. The award, given to Chacón-Cruz by the Hispanics for Los Angeles Opera organization, was presented to Chacón-Cruz by Domingo himself after the two completed a performance of *El Gato Montés*.

“I am honored to receive an award from maestro Plácido Domingo, who has been my mentor and maestro for so many years,” said Chacón-Cruz upon receiving the award. “I feel honored to be his friend and artistic godson.”

Chacón-Cruz will be returning to the Wortham stage this fall when he appears in HGO’s production of *Rigoletto* as the Duke of Mantua.

---

**In Remembrance of Robert “Bob” Cizik**

Houston Grand Opera is deeply saddened by the recent passing of community leader, corporate titan, and opera lover Robert “Bob” Cizik, who served as president and chairman of Houston Grand Opera from 1979 to 1981 and received the Masterson Award in 1998. Bob was an instrumental figure behind the construction of the Wortham Theater Center and was responsible for spearheading the fundraising for the theater during its 10-year capital campaign.

When the oil crash of the 1980s threatened the funding of the new theater, it was Bob’s persuasion skills and astute financing that helped rescue the effort, allowing HGO to eventually relocate from Jones Hall to its own dedicated home in 1987. Bob counted his efforts to get the Wortham Theater Center opened as one of his proudest personal accomplishments.

Houston Grand Opera Endowment Chairman Emeritus Terrylin G. Neale, who served as chairman of HGO for the term immediately following Bob’s, worked closely with Bob on many of his endeavors for HGO. She remembers him for his businessman’s thinking and superstar budgeting abilities.

“Bob had a great awareness of everything that was happening around him. He was smart. He was disciplined. He was a serious man who liked to tackle a project and see it through to completion,” says Neale. “He was a thoughtful man with a keen interest in the arts—and in opera in particular—and he used his strong business acumen to make sure Houstonians always maintained access to the world-class opera produced by HGO.”

We are forever thankful to Bob for the work he did on behalf of HGO and for his generous donations to the Endowment. We will remember Bob for his kindness, for his passion for the arts, and for his hardworking and industrious spirit.
Be part of Opera — Volunteer with HGO Guild

Whether your commitment is long or short, any amount of time you spend volunteering as an HGO Guild member will allow you to further educate yourself about opera and its beautiful history. As you assist HGO in introducing opera to our varied audiences, you'll also get the opportunity to make new opera-loving friends and to meet some of the faces behind our productions.

Have fun as you help HGO!
Volunteers Sylvia Dekmezian and John Beasley help HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech give shuffleboard pointers to mezzo Rihab Chaieb at the Guild Hospitality team spring rep party for the casts of The Phoenix and Don Giovanni.

Save the dates

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2019: Opera Night Live!
Enjoy in-depth interviews of this season’s artists. HGO Guild provides this event free to the community.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2019: Awards Brunch
Please join us for the 29th annual Guild Fall Awards Brunch as we honor stellar volunteers and enjoy performances by HGO Studio artists.

OCTOBER 18 – NOVEMBER 8, 2019: Boutique
Put those sales skills to use at the Opera Boutique in the Grand Foyer. Help customers choose the latest in opera accessories, while earning an extra discount and dress rehearsal tickets for yourself!

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019: Student Performances
Volunteer to help HGOco as a High School Night greeter. Volunteers also needed for other student performances.

For more information on these and other Guild activities, visit hgoguild.org, email guild@hgo.org or call 713-546-0269.
YOU CAN come home again.

The choice of Ana María Martínez as Houston Grand Opera’s new artistic advisor was an easy one. I need only describe the feelings of making music with her to explain it, and I’ve had that privilege for many years, having joyously conducted many performances with her. Her voice is a wonder, and she uses it like a painter’s palette, effortlessly coloring every phrase with elegance. Her dramatic and musical instincts are deep, and she never stops her search for more. The range of what she has performed in her career, much of it seen at HGO, is rare in a single soprano: the Mozart heroines, world premieres, Rusalka, Rosina, Carmen, Adina, both of the soprano roles in Catán’s Florencia en el Amazonas, Mimi, Liù, and many others, but few would ever equal her Madama Butterfly, which was a considerable artistic risk at the time that she was bravely willing to take, premiering the role at HGO before taking her delicate Cio-Cio-San all over the world. All of these qualities will converge in her artistic advisor role.

These are things any keen observer might know about Ana María, but there is much more to her. She is one of the most empathic persons I’ve ever encountered, and she carries all of the accompaniments of great empathy: she truly listens to people, she has keen powers of observation and shrewd analysis. Her intelligence is off the charts, and she lives and works with the highest integrity. These qualities are as inspiring as they are rare, and Ana María has long been one of the most inspiring people in my artistic life.

As an artist myself, I am always in search of new ideas, new ways of thinking, and, most importantly, new ways of deepening the experience of this art we all so love. I wanted more than just a casting consultant, a position many opera companies employ; I wanted a real artistic partner, a consultant to trade and test ideas with, someone who would have a perspective on the art that I could never have, and someone who I knew would challenge my own thinking. Ana María’s appointment, along with that of our new principal guest conductor, Eun Sun Kim, who also begins in the 2019–20 season, together bring a unique future perspective on our rapidly changing world.

At HGO we want to inspire the future of opera, and one of the most obvious ways we do that is through casting performers of the highest level in all of our productions. In her new role, Ana María will be a part of all casting conversations. She will be available for consultation and coaching for our Studio artists and as an expert judge for Concert of Arias—and as one of our most distinguished Studio alums, she brings a long history with her. She will hear singers all over the world as her own singing career continues to take her everywhere. She will report to me on productions, directors, and conductors she thinks would be interesting for Houston. She will help the company raise money. Ana María will be a Spanish-speaking voice for our wonderful company, as we must always remember that we reside in the most diverse city in the United States, and 38 percent of our neighbors speak Spanish at home. We want to continue to embrace our community by having an opera company with the fullest possible range of artistic choices that reflect who we are as a city and a region.

Home is the place where you are understood the most, where you are listened to, and where they love you the most. Ana María, as artistic advisor for Houston Grand Opera, is home.
SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1955, HGO has strived to be different from other major American opera companies. We’ve never shied away from trying something new or creating our own traditions. To make its mark on the world, HGO, like Houston, needed to find its own voice.

Now, after 64 seasons and 66 world premieres, HGO has become an international leader in innovation—and that’s because Houston audiences and supporters have given us a voice that has been heard and celebrated throughout the world. What you experience onstage at the Wortham is not just informed by centuries of operatic tradition—it is shaped by the spirits of the incredibly diverse, optimistic, and hardworking people of Houston. It’s a reflection of all of us.

Just take a look at our mariachi opera series. When HGO’s first mariachi opera, José “Pepe” Martínez and Leonard Foglia’s *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, premiered in 2010, an incredible 64 percent of the people in the audience were new to HGO. The story of a family of migrant workers separated by the border is so resonant and relevant that newcomers and lifelong opera lovers alike have found it profoundly moving. Add to that the intoxicating and potent combination of mariachi and opera music and you can easily see why *Cruzar* has become one of HGO’s most popular commissions in the company’s history.

This season, excitement is mounting for HGO’s second commission in the series, *El Milagro del Recuerdo/The Miracle of*...
Remembering. Composed by José Martínez’s son Javier Martínez, with libretto by Leonard Foglia, the opera is a “prequel” that provides us with the origin stories of the characters we’ve so grown to love. Like the other opera in the series, HGO wanted El Milagro to tell an authentic story that reflects the experiences of real Houstonians, and the holiday-centric opera, fittingly premiering in the Cullen Theater this December, does just that.

This past March, a group of HGO supporters joined the creative team for El Milagro in Mexico City for an exclusive peek at the new opera while it was being developed during an intensive, weeklong workshop. We asked their thoughts on how well El Milagro captures the stories of our city.

“The workshop was rewarding and very touching. There wasn’t a dry eye in the house,” says HGO Trustee Yolanda Knoll.

“I’m the daughter and granddaughter of undocumented workers in the United States, and Cruzar was very personal to me,” Yolanda says. “In many ways, it’s the history of my family. And it’s a story that is globally applicable. A lot of us are immigrants, not just those of us from Mexico and Latin America. People leave families behind, and go on to new lives and new challenges. That’s what makes Cruzar and El Milagro very emotional and beautiful.”

Yolanda was thrilled to be part of the adventure, especially since she had been a part of the mariachi series from the beginning. When Cruzar was still just an idea, Yolanda invited then HGO General Director Anthony Freud to Mexico City. She introduced him to the Mexican Minister of Culture, showed him the sights, and took him to the Plaza Garibaldi—Mexico City’s home of mariachi music, where musicians have been found playing for visitors day and night since the 1920s. Freud was more determined than ever to facilitate the birth of the series that began with Cruzar.

Also present at the El Milagro workshop was Novum Energy Founder and President Alfredo Vilas, who serves on HGO’s Board of Directors. Alfredo and his wife, Marcia, were major supporters of the return of Cruzar to the HGO Resilience Theater in 2018.

“I’m a big proponent of HGO’s Latin works,” Alfredo says. “Houston has a majority Latin population, and this is a story that nearly everyone can identify with. The word ‘opera’ has a connotation with the elite, but when you see Cruzar and El Milagro, it has nothing to do with elitism. It’s popular music with an interesting, relatable storyline, and that’s what makes it so emotional.”

As an immigrant himself, Alfredo also relates personally to the story of Cruzar and El Milagro. He found that the mariachi operas give voice to unique challenges for immigrants in a way that invites understanding from everyone in the audience, no matter their background.

“I was raised in Mexico City, so mariachi music has had a big impact on me. What strikes me about this immigration story is the fact that when you become a success in a new place, you change completely. You’re not the same person. Life takes you a different way. You make sacrifices. Sometimes I feel like my Mexican friends don’t fully understand me, and neither do my Houston friends. You’re always in the middle of two cultures. The operas capture that feeling so well through the story and music.”

David Ruiz represents Bank of America, the Grand Underwriter of the 2019 premiere of El Milagro del Recuerdo and a longtime supporter of HGO’s new works and community collaboration efforts.

“Bank of America supports arts and culture in Houston, and HGO specifically because the work they’re creating is beautiful, relevant to different cultures, and accessible to different audiences,” he says.

The themes of the opera also struck a personal chord with David.

“It was a very personal story to me, because my own parents crossed the border illegally at times. My father was a bracero, like the characters in this story. Seeing that story put onstage and shared with people made me think about what our parents went through. It was very powerful from that perspective. But this isn’t just a story about Mexicans or Mexican Americans. This is a country of immigrants, and everyone has a story about leaving their homeland...whether they crossed an ocean or a desert. It really resonates and makes you think about the sacrifices that people make to come to a place of opportunity.”

David found being a part of the workshop to be a rare treat. “The workshop presentation was powerful. As an audience member, having this insight into the process is so valuable...they were still creating music as the week went on, and they were going to continue to make tweaks. It’s such a privilege to see the transformation of the story and the music.

Who would have thought that the son of a bracero would be taking a vacation from Houston to Mexico to see a production by HGO about braceros?”

Like all of our new works, it is our hope that El Milagro serves as a reflection of everyone in our community and that audiences can celebrate their own stories and experiences through its music.
The Village Communities offer luxury independent living, assisted living and memory care located in Houston’s most desired neighborhoods. Discover an exceptional lifestyle that offers culinary cuisine, enriching programs, concierge services and signature amenities. The Village distinctive lifestyle is centered around you and the life you deserve.

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In the aftermath of the 2015 Paris attacks, world-renowned mezzo-soprano and HGO Studio alumna Joyce DiDonato began work on a project that she hoped would take listeners on a journey from despair to hope, and in doing so remind them of the best of humanity.

*In War & Peace—Harmony Through Music* is a concert event designed to open up conversations about art that unifies and exalts the spirit. Featuring some of the best Baroque arias—from Leonardo Leo’s “Prendi quel ferro, o barbaro!” to Handel’s “Dopo notte,” the evening is presented in two parts, first war, then peace, and DiDonato hopes it will illustrate a “valiant path to peace” for the audience.

—Daniel Renfrow

Joyce DiDonato would like to thank The Pure Land Foundation for its generous support. She would also like to thank Five Arts Foundation as recommended by Helen Berggruen, Susan and John Singer, Helen and Peter Bing, The Howard and Sarah D. Solomon Foundation and Marnie and Kern Wildenthal for their additional support.

In *War & Peace—Harmony Through Music* Cullen Theater November 6, 2019 7 p.m. Tickets start at $45 HGO.org/Joyce

A limited number of gala tickets, including an intimate dinner with Joyce DiDonato, are available by contacting Brooke Rogers at 713-546-0271 or brogers@hgo.org.
HGOco’s history of creating new chamber operas continues with three unique works that tell important stories about women: *Marian’s Song* tells the story of the legendary vocal artist Marian Anderson, *Turn and Burn* explores the lives of female rodeo athletes and rodeo culture in modern-day Houston, and *Katie: The Strongest of the Strong* takes us back to when P.T. Barnum’s circus was all the rage and Katie Sandwina found celebrity as a strongwoman before promoting women’s rights.

**MARIAN’S SONG**

Composed by Damien Sneed (HGOco 2018–19 Music Director and Composer-In-Residence) to a libretto by Houston’s poet laureate emeritus, Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton, the chamber opera tells the story of Marian Anderson through the eyes of modern-day college student Nevaeh. The opera combines classical music with an array of musical styles, as well as with spoken word.

A libretto workshop was held in March where the composer, librettist, local actors, and stage director, Dennis Whitehead Darling, dug into the libretto draft created by Mouton. Actors read the libretto and the creative team discussed strategies about dramatic arc, narrative, and structure that would best suit it to a musical setting. The spoken word element adds dimension—it is the only means by which Nevaeh communicates—while the character of Marian only sings.

Librettist Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton says, “Like opera, spoken word has always been about telling a compelling story. The

Marian Anderson.
Photo courtesy of the Smithsonian.
power of embracing the raw and visceral wordplay within a more classically celebrated art form, is that it opens the doors for people who have found no place in either world to connect in a way they never imagined. In doing so, we level generational and socio-economic barriers and prove that art has the power to connect us on a human level that we can feel at our core.” Two other actor/singers will round out the cast (playing multiple roles) that will also include a small chorus. A music workshop will take place in late November prior to the premiere in March 2020.

“My compositional goal is to set the libretto in a manner that incorporates opera’s traditional texture within a modern musical sound environment,” says composer Damien Sneed. “The challenge comes in making sure that Marian Anderson’s artistic legacy is musically represented and preserved with the highest level of excellence while giving it a strong appeal for younger audience members. I am using elements of romantic opera, avant-garde classical, jazz, gospel, and the African American spiritual for my musical palette.”

Mouton and HGOco Education Manager Alisa Magallón are also working to create an interdisciplinary curriculum that will be available in the form of in-school residencies. Marian Anderson was an important pre-civil rights figure, and the curriculum, combining social studies, history, music, and creative writing, will focus on Anderson and contemporaries who forged the path to the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

*Marian’s Song* will premiere in the Cullen Theater with performances on March 5 and 6, 2020, including an education matinee on March 6 at 10 a.m. For more information, visit HGO.org/ Marian.

## Turn and Burn

Rodeo opera *Turn and Burn* will premiere in Houston in March of 2021. Composer Nell Shaw Cohen, librettist Megan Cohen, and stage director Leslie Swackhammer are the creative team behind this HGOco *Song of Houston* chamber opera, which held a libretto workshop late last November. Composer Nell Shaw Cohen is now hard at work composing the opera so it can be ready for its next workshop in December of this year.

*Turn and Burn* tells parallel stories of a barrel racer and a young Hispanic businesswoman whose lives intersect at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. When professional setbacks threaten to derail their careers, the two form a friendship, finding newfound strength to help each other rise again. The music will reflect both classical, traditional country, and western music. It will utilize a string quartet, drums, and acoustic steel string and electric guitars.

## Katie: The Strongest of the Strong

Composer Faye Chiao and librettist Anton Dudley’s work tells the story of real-life strongwoman and suffragette Katie Sandwina. The 45-minute, student and family-friendly opera was recently workshopped in May and will continue development until its premiere in fall of 2020.

*Katie: The Strongest of the Strong* is unique in that it will feature a cast of five female singers (mezzo to high soprano). The story is told through the eyes of Marina, a reporter from the past who is inspired by Katie’s mental and physical strength. Three “Barbelles” (Beryl, Bebe, and Bernice) round out the cast by portraying a number of colorful characters. This girl-power opera is sure to be a hit for all ages.

![Katie Sandwina “the Lady Hercules”](image)
EXPLORE YOUR CREATIVE IDENTITY

THIS FALL, HGO IS OFFERING A NEW ADULT LEARNING COURSE FOR AGES 55+

Seeking the Human Spirit continues this fall when a new course for life-long learners, inspired by HGO’s Transforming the Mind & Spirit: An Exploration of Creativity event from this past May, will provide participants with opportunities to discover and cultivate a variety of creative practices while collectively producing an original work based on the Seeking the Human Spirit 2019–20 theme of Identity.

The seven-week course will include singing, creative writing and song composition, improvisatory acting, and expressive movement led by guest teaching artists who will be shepherding participants through a variety of creative processes throughout the course.

This course also includes access to final dress rehearsals of HGO’s mainstage fall repertoire—Verdi’s Rigoletto and Handel’s Saul—plus one backstage tour. A final presentation of the created work, presented prior to the final dress rehearsal of Saul, will complete this creative learning adventure. No previous experience is required, only the willingness to explore and think outside of the box.

HGOco Education Manager Alisa Magallón will be the primary instructor of the course and says, “It’s important to acknowledge the artist that lives inside each and every one of us. While most of us are able to identify art that we respond to positively, it sometimes is much more challenging to acknowledge that we are all capable of making meaningful art. For empty nesters, persons in retirement, or ones who have a flexible schedule, art making while being part of an engaging social group can greatly add to one’s quality of life. This course rounds out an inclusive offering of programs designed to invite all ages to create art and music with Houston Grand Opera.”

The new course, priced at $300, consists of eight sessions running from September 10 through October 23. To register, visit HGO.org/creativeidentity.
JUST THE FACTS

GO BEHIND THE SCENES OF OUR 2019-20 REPERTOIRE WITH DRAMATURG JEREMY JOHNSON.
VERDI

RIGOLETTO

OCT 18 | OCT 20 | OCT 26 | OCT 29 | NOV 01

BROWN THEATER | Sung in Italian with projected English translation

CAST

BRIAN MULLIGAN Rigoletto
ARTURO CHACÓN-CRUZ ‡ Duke of Mantua
MANÉ GALOYAN ‡ Gilda
DAVID SHIPLEY * Sparafucile
ZOIE REAMS ‡ Maddalena
NICHOLAS NEWTON † ‡ Monterone
JORDAN DE SOUZA * Conductor

CREATIVE

Director Tomer Zvulun
Associate Director Stephanie Havey *
Set Designer Erhard Rom *
Costume Designer Jessica Jahn
Lighting Designer Robert Wierzel
Movement Director Melissa Noble *
Chorus Master Richard Bado †
Chorus Master Chair Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Scenic design originally created for Wolf Trap Opera.

* Company debut † HGO Studio artist ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
Verdi’s masterpiece of revenge returns to HGO in a new production by Tomer Zvulun, the creative mind behind last season’s The Flying Dutchman. In this production, the grotesque collides with the sumptuous—Jessica Jahn’s costumes, inspired by Otto Dix, heighten the atmosphere of misogyny and classism in Gilda and Rigoletto’s world.

BACKGROUND
Premiered in 1851 at La Fenice in Venice, Rigoletto was the sixth collaboration between Verdi and librettist Francesco Maria Piave of their eight operas together, which include La traviata and Macbeth. Based on a play by Victor Hugo (Le roi s’amuse), Rigoletto is considered a turning point in Verdi’s compositions, the first important opera of his “middle period.” It was during this time that Verdi began experimenting outside of the formal boundaries of arias, duets, and trios.

THE STORY
Originally set in 16th-century Mantua, this production relocates the action to fascist Italy between the world wars. When the opera begins, we see the Duke of Mantua at a ball, singing about the pleasures life could bring with as many women as possible. The hunchbacked court jester, Rigoletto, mocks the courtiers, and one of them, whose daughter the Duke has seduced, curses both the Duke and Rigoletto.

The courtiers plan revenge on Rigoletto by kidnapping his live-in “mistress”—actually Rigoletto’s daughter, Gilda, whom Rigoletto keeps hidden from the world. They trick Rigoletto into assisting them with their plan. Unknown to Rigoletto, Gilda has fallen in love with the Duke, whom she met at church and who professed to be a poor student.

When the courtiers bring her to the Duke, she realizes she has been betrayed. Rigoletto demands her release, and they leave the court together—Gilda pleading for pity on the Duke.

Rigoletto brings Gilda to the tavern of Sparafucile, an assassin he has hired to kill the Duke. Rigoletto forces her to watch the Duke flirt with the assassin’s sister, Maddalena, and tells her to disguise herself as a boy; the two of them will run away once the Duke has been killed.

But Maddalena has fallen for the Duke and convinces her brother to kill the next man to walk into the tavern as a substitute. Gilda overhears this; she enters the tavern in disguise to take the Duke’s place and is fatally wounded. When Rigoletto arrives, Sparafucile wraps Gilda’s body and gives it to Rigoletto for the rest of his payment. While gloating over his success in having the Duke killed, Rigoletto makes the heartbreaking discovery of whose murder he actually contracted.

FUN FACT
The topic of a libertine king in Hugo’s Le roi s’amuse (The King Amuses Himself) was considered too scandalous by the censors. The play was banned in France after its premiere, and the Austrian censors (who governed Venice and other parts of northern Italy at the time) had an equally scandalized reaction to the proposed opera. They would not allow it to proceed unless Verdi and Piave changed the tenor’s rank from king to duke and moved the setting to Mantua—a dukedom that no longer existed—and thus the Duke of Mantua became the name of one of the most famous tenor roles in opera.

THE ARTISTS
Powerhouse baritone Brian Mulligan makes his role debut as the title jester, alongside HGO Studio alumni Arturo Chacón-Cruz as the Duke of Mantua, Mané Galoyan as Gilda, and Zoie Reams as Maddalena. Making their HGO debuts are David Shipley as the assassin Sparafucile, first-year Studio artist Nicholas Newton as Monterone, and Jordan de Souza at the conductor’s podium.
HANDEL

SAUL

CAST

CHRISTOPHER PURVES
Saul/Ghost of Samuel

ARYEH NUSSEBAUM COHEN †
David

ANDRIANA CHUCHMAN
Michal

PUREUM JO †
Merab

PAUL APPLEBY *
Jonathan

PATRICK SUMMERS
Conductor/ Harpsichord
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

BROWN THEATER | Sung in English with projected English text

CREATIVE

Original Director
Barrie Kosky *

Revival Director
Donna Stirrup

Set and Costume Designer
Katrin Lea Tag *

Original Lighting Designer
Joachim Klein *

Associate Lighting Designer
David Manion *

Original Choreographer
Otto Pichler *

Revival Choreographer
Merry Holden *

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

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Saul is a Glyndebourne production, originally performed in the Glyndebourne Festival 2015.

* Company debut † HGO Studio artist ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
Handel’s dramatic oratorio comes to HGO from the Glyndebourne Festival in a vibrant, fantastical production by Barrie Kosky. The sensational staging offers audiences a shocking and breathtaking look into the mental collapse of one of the Bible’s most Learian figures, the aging and resentful king of Israel.

BACKGROUND
Saul was written in 1738 while Handel was living in London, and it premiered at the King’s Theatre in January of 1739. It was his first collaboration with Charles Jennens, with whom he would go on to write the famous Messiah. While the two of them had many disagreements on the structure of Saul and its novel orchestration, they collaborated on at least four other works.

THE STORY
The oratorio opens with a chorus of Israelites thanking God for David’s victory against the giant Goliath. Saul, the king of Israel, offers his daughter Merab to David in marriage. Merab does not like the arrangement because of David’s lower social position, but her sister Michal is in love with him. Jonathan, Saul’s son and his future heir, swears his devotion to David. Saul, overcome with jealousy at David’s newfound glory, orders Jonathan to kill him.

Jonathan pleads with his father to spare David’s life, and he reluctantly agrees despite his unrelenting anger and jealousy toward David. He summons David to his court, but David does not come. Saul seeks assistance from the Witch of Endor to speak with the deceased Samuel, the former king of Israel, even though magic and necromancy has been outlawed in Israel. The ghost of Samuel appears and reminds Saul of his disobedience under Samuel. He then predicts Saul’s death and the death of his sons and army in the next day’s battle against the Amalekites.

David learns of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, whom he loved, and orders the killing of the Amalekite soldier who told him the news. He is crowned king of Israel.

FUN FACT
In Protestant London of the 1700s, religious texts—defined as any sacred text taken directly from or simply inspired by the Bible—were not allowed to be presented onstage as an opera. In order to write operas on religious texts, Handel labeled them as “oratorios.” That classification came with the genre’s structural requirement to include large, long, and complex chorus numbers, giving Handel an opportunity to showcase his incredible choral writing—an opportunity not available with Italian opera seria, which did not make use of choruses. In addition to “opera” and “oratorio,” Handel wrote “music dramas,” which were large-scale structural forms—similar to oratorios with monumental choral numbers—but were based on secular topics instead of religious ones.

THE ARTISTS
Christopher Purves reprises the title role he interpreted to great acclaim for the original Glyndebourne performances. In this production, the same singer also portrays the Ghost of Samuel. HGO Studio alumni Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen and Pureum Jo sing the roles of David and Merab, joined by Andriana Chuchman as Michal and Paul Appleby as Jonathan. Studio alum Chad Shelton portrays the necromancer Witch of Endor, while Keith Jameson sings a variety of narrative roles throughout the work. HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers conducts this powerful work in its first-ever appearance in Houston.

If you see only one thing at HGO this season, it should be the tremendous experience of Handel’s Saul. It lives with you forever.

—PATRICK SUMMERS
JAVIER MARTÍNEZ | LEONARD FOGLIA

EL MILAGRO DEL RECUERDO
THE MIRACLE OF REMEMBERING

CAST

CECILIA DUARTE
Renata

DANIEL NOYOLA †
Laurentino

MIGUEL DE ARANDA
Chucho

VANESSA ALONZO
Lupita

RAFAEL MORAS *
Father Matías

HÉCTOR VÁSQUEZ
Aba

DAVID HANLON ‡
Conductor

CREATIVE

Director
Leonard Foglia

Set Designer
Neil Patel

Costume Designer
Gregory Gale

Lighting Designer
Howell Binkley *

Sound Designer
Andrew Harper

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra

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

CULLEN THEATER | Sung in Spanish with projected English translation

DEC 05 | DEC 08 | DEC 13 | DEC 14 | DEC 15 | DEC 19 | DEC 20 | DEC 21 | DEC 22
A new mariachi world premiere by Javier Martínez and Leonard Foglia comes to the Cullen Theater in the first subscription-series performance of a mariachi opera. The colorful production, set at Christmas in Michoacán, features sets and costumes by Broadway favorites Neil Patel and Gregory Gale.

BACKGROUND
*El Milagro del Recuerdo* is the second mariachi opera to be commissioned by Houston Grand Opera, and only the third mariachi opera ever to be written. The first two, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* (HGO) and *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina* (co-created with the Lyric Opera of Chicago), were both composed by José “Pepe” Martínez, Javier’s father, with librettos also by Leonard Foglia.

THE STORY
It’s 1962, and Renata and Laurentino are married with a young son named Rafael. Laurentino and Chucho, the husband of Renata’s close friend Lupita, have both gone north to the United States to work summer seasons as braceros. Their picking seasons get longer and longer as more work becomes available for them—this will be their first Christmas and Three King’s Day away from their families.

They decide to surprise their wives and children by coming home on Christmas Eve, but Laurentino’s unexpected arrival causes Renata more pain when she realizes he will only be there for one day. She senses that the United States is changing him—he is home for Christmas but not for the more widely celebrated Three King’s Day—and she is hurt and angry that their family is not together throughout the year.

Chucho and Lupita consider moving their whole family to the United States, but are presented with challenges when they realize that Aba, Chucho’s father, has lived his whole life in their small town and does not want to leave. The town grapples with questions of choice: were the choices we’ve made in our lives the right ones? When we have a variety of options that could all be the “right” one for our families, how do we choose?

As a prequel to *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, *El Milagro del Recuerdo* depicts the decisions that Renata and Laurentino make that lead to the tragic events surrounding the first opera.

FUN FACT
Monarch butterflies are a central metaphor in both *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* and *El Milagro del Recuerdo*. They are the most recognizable butterfly in North America, and they migrate thousands of miles every year—one of the hardest migratory patterns of any butterfly—to spend their summers in the United States and their winters in Mexico. The butterflies serve as an impetus for questions the opera’s characters are asking: in *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, where is home? Is home where the journey begins or where the journey ends? In *El Milagro del Recuerdo*, which journey should I take? Where is true happiness found, in stability and reliability, or in adventures and experiences?

THE ARTISTS
Cecilia Duarte and Vanessa Alonzo sing the leading ladies Renata and Lupita, characters they created in the world premiere of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, and Miguel de Aranda appears as Chucho, the character he performed in HGO’s 2018 production of the earlier opera. HGO Studio Artist Daniel Noyola sings the role of Laurentino, with Héctor Vásquez as Chucho’s father, Aba, and Vanessa Becerra as a mysterious and influential unnamed woman. The world premiere performances will be conducted by HGO Studio alumnus David Hanlon, who also served as music director in the world premiers of the first two mariachi operas.

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El Milagro del Recuerdo/The Miracle of Remembering delights in the holiday traditions of our Mexican neighbors, in a heart-filling new opera.

—PATRICK SUMMERS
DONIZETTI

LA FAVORITE

BROWN THEATER | Sung in French with projected English translation

CAST

JAMIE BARTON ‡ Léonor de Guzman
LAWRENCE BROWNLEE Fernand
JACQUES IMBRAILO Alphonse XI
FEDERICO DE MICHELIS ‡ Balthazar
CHRISTOPHE ROUSSET † Conductor

CREATIVE

Director
Kevin Newbury

Set Designer
Victoria Tzykun *

Costume Designer
Jessica Jahn

Lighting Designer
D. M. Wood

Chorus Master
Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Richard Bado †
Sarah and Ernest Butler
Chorus Master Chair

* Company debut † HGO Studio artist ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
Donizetti’s tour-de-force bel canto opera features sets by Victoria Tzykun and costumes by Jessica Jahn, in a new production by Kevin Newbury. This dramatic spectacle of love, mystery, and betrayal is set against the medieval wars between the Castilian king, Alphonse XI, and the Muslim Al-Andalus in southern Iberia.

BACKGROUND

La favorite was composed in 1840 to a libretto by Alphonse Royer and Gustave Vaëz, based on the play Le comte de Comminges by Baculard d’Arnaud. It quickly became one of the most performed operas of its era, appearing in the Paris Opera’s repertoire every season for 54 straight years.

THE STORY

In 1340 Castile, Fernand tells the superior of the St. James Monastery that he wants to leave his life as a monk. He has fallen in love with a woman who has never divulged any details of her life. The superior, Balthazar, also the father of the queen of Castile, is angry at Fernand’s abdication and predicts that he will someday return.

Fernand meets Léonor, his love, who still refuses to reveal her identity. She tells him they will never be able to meet again and gives him a parting gift: a rank in the army. Fernand speculates that Léonor must be someone with significant political connections to help him in this way.

A few months later, Alphonse XI returns victorious from the Battle of Río Salado. The king muses on his love for Léonor and his desire to divorce the queen for her; we learn that Fernand’s mystery lover is the king’s mistress.

Because Fernand played an important role in the military triumph, the king wishes to honor him with any reward he requests. Fernand asks for Léonor’s hand in marriage. Alphonse XI acquiesces to the request knowing that divorcing his queen would cause a scandal with the church. He orders Fernand and Léonor to be married within the hour.

Realizing that Fernand needs to know about her past, Léonor sends her confidante to tell him—but the messenger is detained before Fernand can be informed. He learns of Léonor’s relationship with the king only after the wedding ceremony. He publicly rebukes Léonor and leaves her to return to the monastery. Back at St. James, he readies himself for a cloistered life when Léonor comes to plead for compassion; he is ready to forgive her when, grieved and exhausted, she collapses in death.

FUN FACT

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

THE ARTISTS

HGO Studio alumna Jamie Barton sings the demanding and impressive title role of Léonor, opposite Lawrence Brownlee as the love-struck Fernand. Jacques Imbrailo portrays the Castilian king, while HGO Studio alumnus Federico De Michelis sings the king’s father-in-law, the monastery superior Balthazar. French conductor Christophe Rousset makes his HGO debut leading the orchestra in this 19th-century gem.

La favorite is a melody-soaked festival of rare singing, and a wonderful spiritual and religious odyssey.

—PATRICK SUMMERS
VERDI

AIDA

CAST

TAMARA WILSON  Aida
RUSSELL THOMAS  Radames
MICHAELA MARTENS  Amneris
REGINALD SMITH JR.  Amonasro
PEIXIN CHEN  Ramfis

CREATIVE

Director  Phelim McDermott *
Associate Director  Joe Austin *
Set Designer  Tom Pye *
Costume Designer  Kevin Pollard *
Lighting Designer  Bruno Poet

Choreographer  Jorrell Lawyer-Jefferson *
Silk Effects Choreographer  Basil Twist
Chorus Master  Richard Bado †

BROWN THEATER | Sung in Italian with projected English translation

NEW PRODUCTION

JAN 31 FEB 02 M FEB 08 FEB 11 FEB 14 FEB 16 M

Co-production with English National Opera and Grand Théâtre de Genève.

* Company debut † HGO Studio artist ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
One of the most famous and most celebrated operas in all of history comes back to Houston in grand fashion in a stunning new production by Phelim McDermott, co-produced with English National Opera and Grand Théâtre de Genève. The epic drama is visually enhanced with silk effects choreography by Basil Twist, a designer and puppeteer renowned for his groundbreaking artistry.

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

THE STORY
In ancient Egypt, the Egyptians and the Ethiopians are at war. Radames and Aida are secretly in love with one another, but are on opposite sides of the conflict: Radames is the commander of the Egyptian forces, but Aida is the daughter of the Ethiopian king, Amonasro, and is a captive of the Egyptians. Radames and Aida both struggle with the choice between loyalty to their countries and their love for each other.

Amneris, the daughter of the Egyptian king, is also in love with Radames and jealously suspects that Aida is the one he truly loves. After Radames leaves for battle, Amneris falsely tells Aida that he was slain; this spurs Aida to confess her love for Radames, and Amneris swears revenge. Radames returns from battle victorious, and the king of Egypt promises him any reward he would choose. He asks for freedom for the Ethiopian captives, among them Amonasro, who is concealing his identity.

On the eve of his wedding to Amneris, Radames and Aida declare their love for one another. He wants to flee with her and tells her about a safe escape route: in doing so, he unwittingly reveals the location of the Egyptian army to Amonasro, hiding nearby. Amneris and the high priest Ramfis enter with the imperial guards, who see Radames with the enemy and arrest him as a traitor.

Radames refuses to deny the accusations against him, not wanting to continue living without Aida, who has fled for Ethiopia following his arrest. He is condemned to death as a traitor, and sealed in a temple as punishment. Once there, he sees Aida: she has hidden herself there in order to die with him.

FUN FACT
The Triumphal March after the victorious return of Radames and the army is one of the most recognizable tunes in opera and also offers the opportunity for incredibly elaborate spectacle. In the 1871 Cairo premiere, a dozen elephants and 15 camels took part in the Triumphal March; in the 2000 production in Shanghai, the cast of the opera exceeded 2,000 people, with the People’s Liberation Army providing 1,650 soldiers to march through an open-air arena at the Shanghai International Arts Festival.

THE ARTISTS
This production’s indomitable cast is headlined by international superstars Tamara Wilson—an HGO Studio alumna—as Aida, and Russell Thomas—making his role and house debut—as Radames. Michaela Martens sings the jealous Amneris, joined by two more Studio alumni, Reginald Smith Jr. as Amonasro and Peixin Chen as Ramfis. Musa Ngqungwana makes his house debut as the king of Egypt, and HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers leads the cast through Verdi’s unforgettable score.

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Aida is my favorite single score of any opera, because it has everything one loves about opera all in one. —PATRICK SUMMERS
R. STRAUSS

SALOME

BROWN THEATER | Sung in German with projected English translation

CAST

LISE LINDSTROM * Salome
RYAN MCKINNY ‡ Jokanaan
CHAD SHELTON ‡ Herod
SUSAN GRAHAM Herodias
DIMITRI PITTAS Narraboth
EUN SUN KIM Conductor

CREATIVE

Director Francisco Negrin *
Associate Director Angela Kleopatra Saroglou *
Set and Costume Designer Louis Désiré *
Lighting Designer Bruno Poet
Projection Designer Joan Rodón *

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra


* Company debut ‡ HGO Studio artist ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
Richard Strauss’s darkly erotic tale appears in a production by director Francisco Negrin in his house debut, with sets and costumes by Louis Désiré. The surrealistic setting intensifies the twisted dissonance of Salome’s love for Jokanaan and his eventual slaughter at her request.

**BACKGROUND**

*Salome* as a French play was written by Oscar Wilde in 1891 as a sexualized distortion of the biblical story of Salome’s dance for King Herod and the following execution of John the Baptist. Strauss saw the play in a German translation by Hedwig Lachmann and used that text as the basis for his libretto.

**THE STORY**

King Herod has imprisoned Jokanaan (John the Baptist) in a cistern below his palace, where the king’s guards hear him prophesy every night. Narraboth, the captain of King Herod’s guards, is in love with Salome, so when she comes out onto the terrace and asks him to bring Jokanaan to her, he agrees in exchange for a smile from her.

When Narraboth brings Jokanaan to the terrace, the prophet shouts about Herod and his wife Herodias. Salome becomes obsessed with him: his skin, his hair, his lips—and she asks him to let her touch him, which he rejects. She begs for a kiss from Jokanaan, who continues to refuse, and Narraboth is so distraught that he kills himself.

Herod decides to move his dinner to the terrace in the night air as Jokanaan is returned to his cell. The king stares lustfully at Salome, his stepdaughter, and asks her to eat and drink with him. Herodias calls for Jokanaan’s execution, but Herod is afraid of the prophet’s power in working miracles.

Herod finally asks Salome to dance for him, for which he pledges to give her anything her heart desires. After ensuring Herod would honor his promise, Salome agrees to dance the Dance of the Seven Veils for him, removing her seven veils until she is naked in front of him. She asks for the head of Jokanaan on a silver platter. Herod protests, but he has made a promise. The head is brought out for Salome, and she finally fulfills her desire to kiss his lips.

**FUN FACT**

The legendary Al Pacino saw a great deal of Oscar Wilde’s personality in the character of Herod. In 2011, he staged performances of the play in English, which he directed and starred in as Herod, opposite Jessica Chastain as Salome. He directed a documentary-drama of the making of that play in a movie titled *Wilde Salomé*, where viewers get an in-depth look at Pacino’s directorial style and theoretical concepts of the Wilde drama.

**THE ARTISTS**

The title character is portrayed by Lise Lindstrom making her HGO debut. HGO Studio alumni Ryan McKinny and Chad Shelton play Jokanaan and Herod, with Susan Graham as Herodias and Dimitri Pittas as Narraboth. Eun Sun Kim, this season’s Lynn Wyatt Great Artist, leads Strauss’s luscious and seductive score in her first outing in her new position as principal guest conductor for HGO.
MOZART

THE MAGIC FLUTE

CREATIVE

Original Co-directors: Suzanne Andrade * and Barrie Kosky
Revival Director: Tobias Ribitzki *
Associate Director: Erik Friedman
Set and Costume Designer: Esther Bialas *
Original Lighting Designer: Diego Leetz *
Animation Designer: Paul Barritt *
Chorus Master: Richard Bado *

CAST

NORMAN REINHARDT †
Tamino

SO YOUNG PARK
Queen of the Night

THOMAS GLASS †
Papageno

BRENTON RYAN
Monostatos

JANE GLOVER
Conductor

YING FANG *
Pamina

ANTHONY ROBIN SCHNEIDER †
Sarastro/ Speaker

YING FANG *
Pamina

BRENTON RYAN
Monostatos

JANE GLOVER
Conductor

Original production created by Deutsche Oper am Rhein (Düsseldorf Duisburg) and Komische Oper Berlin.

* Company debut † HGO Studio artist ‡ Former HGO Studio artist
Barrie Kosky’s production of *The Magic Flute* has played internationally in over 20 cities to over half a million people. Conceived with Suzanne Andrade and Paul Barritt of the British theater company “1927,” the new take on the classic fairy tale removes the spoken dialogue and creates a silent-film aesthetic with remarkably complex video projections over the singers.

**BACKGROUND**

*The Magic Flute* was written in 1791 and was the last opera Mozart wrote, premiering only two months before his death. It was written as a *Singspiel*, a German theatrical structure that includes singing and speaking, though in this production the dialogue is removed. Emanuel Schikaneder, the first Papageno, wrote the libretto, and the work premiered at his theater in Vienna.

**THE STORY**

Three ladies, attendants of the Queen of the Night, save the young Prince Tamino from a fierce dragon. The Queen of the Night beseeches him to rescue her daughter, Pamina, who is being held captive by an evil sorcerer, Sarastro. The ladies show him a picture of Pamina; he falls instantly in love and agrees to rescue her. To protect him on his mission, the ladies provide him with a magic flute and the unwilling company of the bird-catcher Papageno. Three spirits guide the pair to their destination.

Papageno reaches Sarastro’s palace first and finds Pamina. He tells her that Tamino will be there soon to rescue her. As Tamino approaches the temple, an old priest lets him in, telling him that Sarastro is not an evil man and that Tamino should not trust the Queen of the Night.

Papageno and Pamina are caught trying to escape, and they are brought in with Tamino before Sarastro, who says that Tamino must go through trials of wisdom and enlightenment in order to be worthy of Pamina’s hand.

Tamino and Papageno are sworn to silence throughout the trials, although Papageno quickly breaks his vow. Before the last trial, the vow of silence is lifted and Tamino and Pamina can speak again. She says she will undergo the final trials with him, and the music of the magic flute protects them as they walk through rooms of fire and water. As they complete the trials of wisdom and enlightenment, the priests of the temple invite them to enter their brotherhood. The Queen of the Night is magically dispelled into the darkness, and Sarastro praises the ideals of wisdom and brotherhood.

**FUN FACT**

The highly symbolic text of *The Magic Flute* is said to be largely based on Masonic principles, as Mozart and Schikaneder were both Freemasons. The Age of Enlightenment had a significant effect on the text as well: “enlightened absolutism” was a theory of monarchical authority in which “enlightened” rulers worked for the welfare of all their subjects rather than only for themselves or for the elite classes. Enlightenment rulers prided themselves on their support for the arts, for wisdom, and for intellectual curiosity, all elements of Sarastro’s brotherhood. Emperor Joseph II was a friend and benefactor to Mozart and was considered one of the great Enlightenment rulers.

**THE ARTISTS**

HGO Studio alumni fill out this effervescent cast of characters, with Norman Reinhardt as Tamino, Thomas Glass as Papageno, and Anthony Robin Schneider as Sarastro. Ying Fang makes her HGO debut as Pamina, and So Young Park makes her mainstage HGO debut after singing the Queen of the Night in outdoor performances in 2015. Brenton Ryan takes on the role of Monostatos, while HGO Studio Artist Dorothy Gal takes on the role of Papagena. Mozart specialist Jane Glover, author of the book *Mozart’s Women*, conducts the sprightly score.
**ESTE MOMENTO SAGRADO**

**THIS HOLY MOMENT**

BY DAVID HANLON

**EL MILAGRO DEL RECUERDO** is an unusual opera in at least three ways: it is a Christmas opera, of which there are some but not many; it is a mariachi opera, of which there are only two others, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* and *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina*; and it is a prequel opera, of which there are none. Why then does the world need a third mariachi opera that is both a Christmas opera and a prequel?

The mariachi aspect of this is easiest to answer, as both preceding mariachi operas were enormous successes. The idea for a mariachi opera hatched in 2009 when then HGO General Director Anthony Freud checked out a performance in the Brown Theater by the legendary Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, known as “El Mejor Mariachi del Mundo.” Freud was blown away along with the rest of the audience, and he sensed the operatic potential in the mariachi tradition. He commissioned Vargas’s music director, Pepe Martínez, to write an opera with the director and librettist Leonard Foglia, who had lived in Mexico for years. The opera, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, was an international hit, traveling to three continents, throughout the U.S., and with no fewer than four productions at HGO itself, twice in 2010, and again in 2013 and 2018. Following up *Cruzar*’s success, Martínez and Foglia reunited to write a second mariachi opera, *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina*, for the Lyric Opera of Chicago, which has since travelled to San Diego, HGO, and last spring to Fort Worth. The operas are rich celebrations of Mexican music, stories, and heritage that connect to all audiences regardless of background. After one rehearsal for *Cruzar*’s Parisian premiere, an Eastern European audience member sought out Foglia to tell him, with tears in her eyes, that this Mexican tale was her story as well.

Why then a mariachi Christmas opera? The mariachi operas have thrived as a reflection of Mexican history and culture, and the richness of Mexico’s Christmas traditions promised an inspiring vein from which to draw. In particular, *El Milagro* revolves around the rehearsals for a traditional Mexican pastorela. This nativity play dramatizes shepherds seeking out the infant Jesus while Satan tempts them to stray from their path. In the end, San Miguel vanquishes Satan and the shepherds reach the Christ Child. The pastorela offers sweetness and humor, while at the same time serving as a device where the characters interrogate their relationship to tradition. Some regard the pastorela as a proud cultural duty, some as something they do for their family, while others are plainly uncomfortable with the tradition, identifying more with American rock and roll.
And why a prequel? *El Milagro* revisits four characters from *Cruzar*: Laurentino, his wife, Renata, and his married friends Chucho and Lupita. In *Cruzar*, Chucho convinces Laurentino to join the United States’ bracero program, which provided a legal way for Mexicans to find temporary work in the U.S. The program was an economic boon for men like Laurentino and Chucho. But so many men left Mexico to work that there were whole “pueblos sin hombres,” as Renata sings in *Cruzar*—towns without men. Renata’s isolation becomes so agonizing that she ventures across the desert to join Laurentino in the U.S., with tragic results. *El Milagro* imagines the last Christmas that Laurentino and Renata spend together before her fateful journey. Laurentino and Chucho have unexpectedly returned on Christmas Eve amidst rehearsals for the pastorela. As welcome as they are, not all is well. Laurentino will only stay two days, determined to return to the U.S. to provide for his family. While Renata is crumbling under the weight of raising their son alone, she fears that Laurentino is becoming a stranger to his family.

The richness of these characters is reason enough to revisit Laurentino and Renata, but *El Milagro* sheds new light on their story by portraying it in a very different way. *Cruzar*’s storytelling slips suddenly between time and space, traversing present and past, America and Mexico, sometimes even within the same scene. Within *Cruzar* these sudden jumps reflect the now-elderly Laurentino’s disoriented mind on his deathbed. This fractured approach also reflects Laurentino’s fractured life. He’s a man torn between two countries without being at home in either, a man torn between the past, present, and future, who spent his youthful years working towards a future with his family that he would never enjoy.

*El Milagro* does not reproduce *Cruzar*’s pervasive leaps of time and space. It remains almost entirely fixed in Christmas Eve in Michoacan in 1962. For these characters who were torn by time and geography, this focus becomes an act of grace—a Christmas miracle. We, along with Laurentino, have a brief moment where we slow down and immerse ourselves in the moment of the holiday.

Paradoxically, this concentration on the present moment intensifies our awareness of past and future. The rituals of the holiday becomes *un milagro del recuerdo*—a way of measuring the distance travelled in the character’s lives—whether it is Chucho’s father contemplating how he has played every role in the *pastorela* over his long life or Laurentino and Renata reconnecting with their childhood love for each other. As for the future, the tragedy that awaits the characters in *Cruzar* colors *El Milagro*’s story with melancholy. And yet, that same tragedy also infuses the story with an intense sweetness. We are all the more aware of how precious simple moments are in their fragility. This is true for *El Milagro* characters, and for us in our holiday seasons. Like the characters in *El Milagro*, we can never know if this Christmas is just another, or the last one before an irrevocable change, good or bad. We can only do as the characters of *El Milagro* do—to come together to savor this holy moment and its miracle of family, its miracle of togetherness, and the miracle of remembrance, one more time.

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1Before you say *Barbiere* is a prequel to *Le Nozze di Figaro*, I’d have to argue it doesn’t count as the Beaumarchais plays on which they are based were written in chronological order.
HGO Publications Director Laura Chandler is used to making all kinds of changes at a moment’s notice due to breaking news—and this article is one of those! After I talked to Laura for this piece, she confessed she was retiring. This piece is now a tribute to someone who, throughout her 20-year reign as HGO’s editorial czar, has had a massive impact on HGO and all of its publications. We miss her already!
PERRYN LEECH: Tell us a little bit about your upbringing and family life.

LAURA: My parents were Dust Bowl Okies! We lived in Oklahoma City—my dad owned a busy appliance store and I was the middle of three kids. My mom worked at the store also, and so did all of us kids from the time we were about 12 years old. It was exactly as you would imagine a mom and pop store.

What about school?
I was a real (slightly obnoxious!) bookworm in elementary school, and I think from an early age the other kids thought I was odd. I would always be acting out scenes from the books I read. We had music and foreign language instruction in elementary school. I loved both, and when I got to high school, I won a state award in French. I was a bit of a spitfire, to be honest.

I find that hard to believe, knowing you now!
Thank you, but I think that was because when I went to middle and high school, I decided that I didn’t want to be “odd” anymore and tried to fit in better with my peers! It was a difficult time to be in school in Oklahoma City, as the schools were being desegregated under a federal court order. They tried a different integration plan in each of my high school years, and while all of it was absolutely necessary, there was a lot of busing involved, so it was hard to maintain friendships.

What did you decide to do after that?
I had no real idea what to do or what to study, but writing and journalism were definitely in my thoughts. I knew I wanted to go to a smaller school—after visiting my older sister at Oklahoma State University, I knew that a big university wasn’t for me. So I visited Southwestern Oklahoma State University and it immediately felt right. I went there to study English as a major and French as a minor.

So, away from home but still close!
Absolutely! I knew when I saw it that it was a good school for me, and that became even clearer after I got there. I went to audition (with my roommate, who was a friend from high school) for the William Inge play The Dark at the Top of the Stairs and “found my people.” I got cast and it was like a hole was filled in my life. I had a kissing scene with a dashing young theater major named John, which would lead to our getting married between our junior and senior year. And we had our son, Aaron, soon after we finished school.

What happened after college with a newborn and starting newly married life?
John worked for a construction company for a while and then eventually he got a job at the Oklahoma Theater Center in the technical department. And we both acted in some plays there. Then we had a big opportunity arise with John getting a job with his dad’s company, ARCO Pipeline. It was a significant
bump up in pay, and after six months he was transferred to Independence, Kansas, to be a control center supervisor. Independence was a small town but wealthy because of oil.

That must have been a big change for you?
It certainly was. Independence is the birthplace of William Inge, whose play brought us together in college! Inge had left his manuscripts, personal library, and correspondence to the community college in Independence. John was on rotating shifts, and our daughter, Michaela, was born, and I was being the homemaker. But I knew I wanted to teach at the community college, so I started to work on my master’s degree. As part of that, I wrote some pieces about Inge and his work based on my research in the Inge Collection, which were published in scholarly journals.

As you found out more about Inge, did that lead to anything?
It did! A former teacher at the community college was working to establish a William Inge Festival to honor living American playwrights for their contributions to American theater, and John and I were able to get in on the ground floor in making that happen. We got to do some amazing work—we produced, directed, and performed in some wonderful pieces for the festival. The festival is still going to this day, and it now honors an emerging playwright each year as well. It was a wonderful time of being big fish in a relatively small pond.

That sounds like real fun, although it must have had its challenges with a still-young family.
It was great fun, and since our activities for the festival were in quite a concentrated time period, we were able to make it work. But then our world was changed when ARCO relocated to Houston. It was 1993, and although John obviously had his job, I was looking for something to fit around family life and responsibilities. So I tried my hand at writing young adult fiction and other projects. I also trained myself in layout software to add to my skill set. I would eventually put that to good work at Pen World, a niche magazine about fine pens based in Houston.

You were doing what you could to add to your skills and open up your opportunities?
Yes, and everything I learned at Pen World helped me land this perfect job at HGO. In 1998, I saw HGO’s advertisement and it leapt off the page at me. My director was Jo LaBrecque. She and David Gockley wanted Opera Cues to basically be like Opera News, but even more accessible, and I think we developed it really well along those lines. I left HGO for a little while to go back to Pen World at a time of need, but I am very proud of Opera Cues and I think people appreciate the quality of it. We have many wonderful contributors, so there is always plenty to read and digest.

We prefer not to talk about the time you left! So why did you come back to finish your job here?
I loved working at Pen World and was very proud of how we developed the magazine, but the work was very insular. I missed being in an arts organization and especially all my wonderful friends and colleagues at HGO. When the opportunity came to return, I couldn’t resist coming back, and I am so glad to be finishing my working life here at a company that I have had such a long connection with. HGO has been my home company for a long time, and it has been a huge part of my working life.
This fall, the HGO Studio revives a tradition from years past: presenting our annual Studio Showcase in the Wortham’s Cullen Theater in mid-September, before the company’s season begins. This program of opera scenes is one of my favorite events of the year, as it introduces the artists of the Studio to the HGO community and gives our incoming artists an opportunity to perform for their new “home” audience for the first time. The scenes offer an exciting glimpse into the emerging talents of the Studio. Showcase is a great way for first-time attendees to deepen a personal connection with HGO’s artists that will last through the season and for years to come. Studio artists appear frequently in main stage productions during their tenure in the program, and many will return to perform with the company as alumni. Showcase tickets are a complimentary benefit for HGO subscribers (or an affordable ticket for guests or single-ticket buyers).

Studio Showcase mirrors the principles that guide the Studio throughout the season: individualized, intensive training intended to advance artists’ skills and make the most of their unique talent. We spend countless hours poring over possible scenes in order to find those that will best highlight the individual voices of the singers in our studio while also putting a spotlight on our excellent Studio pianist/coaches. Each of the carefully selected scenes tells a compelling story and inspire the artists to grow technically, musically, and expressively.

Every season we select a visiting stage director who has a gift for teaching artists through the staging process; this year, Rob Kearley will return to HGO for the first time since serving as associate director for The Passenger. The director encourages singers to dig for their deepest interpretation of each scene through nine days of intensive rehearsal. Then, we hit the stage with costumes, props, lighting, and scenery provided by our talented and dedicated technical and production staff. The process helps the new artists understand the workings of HGO, both onstage and backstage, through time spent with the company’s staff and crew.

Among this year’s highlights are two scenes that preview HGO’s season: a charming duet from The Magic Flute and the epic fourth-act duet between Amneris and Radames from Aida. The Aida selection is unusual for this program, as these are roles typically reserved for a bit later in a singer’s career. Studio Showcase is a safe place for artists to perform a portion of a role that will play an important part in their future, and I am especially excited to see Lindsay Kate Brown and Richard Trey Smagur perform this scene with returning pianist/coach Kyle Naig. Introducing the Studio’s incoming artists is another important part of the Showcase program. A scene from a Handel rarity, Giustino, will highlight soprano Elena Villalón and bass William Guanbo Su in their first performance with the company. Accompanied by our new pianist/coach, Alex Munger, bass-baritone Nicholas Newton will join Richard Trey Smagur in a scene from one of the most important American operas, Floyd’s Of Mice and Men. Rounding out the program are scenes from Debussy’s lush Pelléas et Mélisande (featuring Dorothy Gal and Geoffrey Hahn) and Rossini’s rare, hilarious comedy La pietra del paragone (hand-picked for Leia Lensing and Daniel Noyola). The program closes with excerpts from two famous stories, Massenet’s Cendrillon (Cinderella) and Thomas’ Hamlet.

This year’s Studio Showcase will be presented on September 13 at 7 p.m. and September 15 at 2 p.m. at the Cullen Theater. For tickets, contact Customer Care (713-228-6737, customercare@hgo.org) or reserve your seat online at HGO.org.

—Brian Speck, Director of the HGO Studio

The Houston Grand Opera Studio is one of the most highly respected young artist programs in the country. For more than 40 years it has served young singers and pianist/coaches, providing a bridge between full-time training and full-fledged operatic careers. Alumni of the Studio perform at the best opera houses all around the world and make frequent return appearances to the Wortham stage.
Having just finished her undergraduate work, Elena Villalón is among the youngest-ever incoming Studio artists.

Born in Houston but raised in Austin, Elena first experienced opera when she was about six years old and attended The Magic Flute with her class. At the time, she decided she wasn’t a fan.

As her voice developed, she decided to take a new look at opera and found a YouTube video of La traviata, starring Anna Netrebko and Rolando Villazón, and immediately fell in love. She decided then that she would pursue opera professionally.

That decision led her to the University of Cincinnati College–Conservatory of Music and ultimately to HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy (YAVA) and the Concert of Arias. In the season ahead, she looks forward to La favorite, in which she’ll perform the role of Inez, and to singing the enigmatic role of the Woman in the student matinee performances in the world premiere run of El Milagro del Recuerdo. She’s also excited about studying the roles of both Pamina and Papagena in the once-hated Magic Flute.

Nicholas Newton grew up in a musical household, with a father, a brother, and both grandmothers involved in music.

As the first member of his nuclear family to apply for college, Nicholas found the process overwhelming. He ended up going to community college first, followed by San Diego State University, where he had his first formal voice lessons.

For graduate school, Nicholas was accepted by his dream school, Rice University. At the same time, he was accepted into HGO’s YAVA program. He decided not to make a final decision about graduate school until after YAVA—to see how he liked his voice lessons with Dr. Stephen King, the Studio’s director of vocal instruction and also a voice professor at Rice. Nicholas loved his lessons, and the week after YAVA, he won the grand prize in a major San Diego competition. He just finished his master’s degree at Rice.

This season at HGO, he especially looks forward to singing Monterone in Rigoletto in Italian—the role he sang in English in Saint Louis—and to the “unbelievable opportunity” of studying the title role in Saul and to rehearse as Saul for the entire first week until Christopher Purves is available.

Born in China, bass William Guanbo Su says he got started on the classical music path after getting “kicked out” of his school chorus when his voice started to change at about 12 or 13 years old. William was devastated, so his perceptive mother found him a voice teacher, who quickly recognized she was dealing with a special talent. It seemed best for him to go to the United States to study, and that’s just what William did—at age 14, by himself.

A defining experience came during his junior year at the Manhattan School of Music, when he went to Vienna for five weeks to study German lieder with big-name teachers, which he quickly fell in love with. During his graduate work at Juilliard, he felt torn between lieder and opera, but opera won the tug-of-war when he was cast as Pluton in Rameau’s Hippolyte et Aricie.

He became interested in the HGO Studio after meeting Dr. Stephen King at the Aspen Music Festival and School. HGO’s reputation for taking good care of its artists and hiring them as guest artists after they have finished their training appealed to him.

This season, William especially looks forward to studying the role of Sparafucile in Rigoletto.

Pianist/Coach Alex Munger had no exposure to opera until his freshman year at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire, when he was asked to play rehearsals for Die Fledermaus. He enjoyed it and also enjoyed playing for the vocal students’ lessons. Along the way, he became increasingly comfortable with the coaching part of a pianist/coach’s job.

Over time, Alex pieced together an idea of how his music career could unfold. From his teachers, he learned about collaborative piano programs, and he ended up pursuing an excellent one for his graduate degree at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

He was a pianist/coach at the Aspen Music Festival and School last summer when he met HGO Studio Director Brian Speck, who encouraged him to audition for the pianist/coach slot with the Studio. Alex was impressed by the description of what the HGO Studio was seeking in a pianist/coach. “They were looking for more than just technical chops—there is a whole range of skills they were looking for,” says Alex. “I thought, ‘If that’s their philosophy, that must be a really great place to learn from. I’m very thankful for what’s coming up and excited to be part of everything HGO does.’”

—Laura Chandler
**HGO STUDIO ARTISTS 2019–20**

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

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

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

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

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

Kyle Naig  
pianist/coach  
*Ms. Kathleen R. Cross/Stephanie Larsen/Dr. and Mrs. Miguel Miro-Quesada/Richard M. Stout Fellow*

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

Daniel Noyola  
bass  
*Beth Madison Fellow*

Richard Trey Smagur  
tenor  
*Michelle Beale and Dick Anderson Fellow*

William Guanbo Su  
bass  
*Anne and Albert Chao Fellow*

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

**HGO STUDIO FACULTY & STAFF**

Brian Speck, Director  
Michael Heaston, Music Director  
Jamie Gelfand, Studio Manager  
Carlisle Floyd, Artistic Advisor  
Stephen King, Director of Vocal Instruction  
Sponsored by Jill and Allyn Risley and Janet Sims  
Patrick Summers, Conducting Instructor and Coach  
Margaret Alkek Williams Chair

Peter Pasztor, Principal Coach  
Sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. James A. Elkins Jr. Endowment Fund  
Kirill Kuzmin, Assistant Conductor  
Geoffrey Loff, Assistant Conductor  
Blair Salter, Assistant Conductor  
Tara Faircloth, Drama Coach  
Philip Lehl, Acting Coach  
Adam Noble, Movement Instructor  
Melissa Noble, Movement Instructor  
Christa Gaug, German Instructor  

Enrica Vagliani Gray, Italian Instructor  
Sponsored by Marsha Montemayor  
Nicole Uhlig, French Instructor  
Brian Connelly, Piano Instructor  
Robert Kearley, Showcase Director  
Sponsored by Marcheta and John Beasley  
Margo Garrett, Guest Coach  
Kathleen Kelly, Guest Coach  
John Churchwell, Guest Coach

**HGO STUDIO UNDERWRITERS**

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Mr. Patrick Carfizzi, Brenda Harvey-Traylor, Jerry and Sharyn Metcalf, and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Reynolds.

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

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

HGO thanks Magnolia Houston for outstanding support of the HGO Studio and YAVA programs.

Additional support for the Houston Grand Opera Studio is provided by the following funds within the Houston Grand Opera Endowment, Inc.:  
*The Gordon and Mary Cain Foundation Endowment Fund  
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**SAVE THE DATE**

Don’t miss these opportunities to hear HGO Studio artists! Purchase tickets to the events listed here online at HGO.org/schedul tickets/calendar or by telephone at 713-228-6737.

**SEPT. 13 & 15 STUDIO SHOWCASE**

The singers and pianists of the HGO Studio perform a program of opera scenes in Wortham Center’s Cullen Theater on Sept. 13 at 7 p.m. and on Sept. 15 at 2 p.m. Free to season subscribers; nonsubscribers may purchase mezzanine tickets at HGO.org.

**DEC. 6 & 8 STUDIO RECITAL SERIES**

Hear HGO Studio artists perform in the intimate and elegant salon at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 1406 Kirby Drive. Dec. 6 at 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 8 at 5 p.m.
Bauer Family High School Voice Studio Concludes Busy Season

It was a busy season for the Bauer Family HSVS that culminated with a final recital and scholarship competition on May 18 at The Shepherd School of Music’s Duncan Recital Hall at Rice University. Gwendolyn Alfred (voice faculty, Texas Southern University), Alicia Gianni (HGO Studio alumna and frequent mainstage artist), and Robin Rice (Professor of Voice at The Shepherd School of Music, Rice University) were adjudicators. The 2019 scholarship winners were: first prize, Sean Holshouser; second prize, Daniel Boyd; and third prize, Alina Dong. An Encouragement Award went to junior Emilio Vasquez, who will return to the program in the fall.

Graduating seniors who will set off for the next phase in their careers this fall are Daniel Boyd, Lawrence University; Jadon Campos, University of Houston; Alina Dong, Harvard University; Sean Holshouser, University of Houston; Maximillian Macias, Baylor University; Ashley Onuigbo, Carnegie Mellon University; and Riley Vagis, Loyola University. We wish them well and look forward to hearing from them in the future.

Three studio members returning for their senior year will be John Baugh IV, Strake Jesuit College Preparatory; Nidia Guevara-Nolasco, Angleton HS; and Emilio Vasquez, Shadow Creek HS. They will be joined by Brianna Escamilla, Angleton HS; Ariadne Lopez, Galena Park HS; Kanade Motomura, HSPVA; Sebastian Pineda, Deer Park HS; Angie Tovar, HSPVA; and Jude Watt, Kingwood HS.

A major success of the Bauer Family HSVS is the dedication and mentorship of its voice faculty. Nichole Asel and Christopher Michel, Sam Houston State University, and Hector Vasquez, University of Houston, taught the students weekly voice lessons and supported them in their applications for college. Next fall, Nichole Asel will be moving on to take a new position with the voice faculty at Colorado State University.

Joining Michel and Vasquez on the Bauer Family HSVS voice faculty in the fall will be Alicia Gianni, who will bring years of private voice teaching and operatic performing experience to HSVS. Gianni’s most recent appearance with HGO was in Florencia en el Amazonas as Rosalba.

Bauer Family High School Voice Studio members are selected from a competitive audition of Houston-area students who demonstrate exceptional potential in voice and plan to pursue classical vocal performance at the college level. The program is a 100% scholarship that includes 24 voice lessons, monthly public masterclasses with HGO guest artists and staff, tickets to all final mainstage dress rehearsals, a college audition video shoot, and a $750 honorarium towards college audition expenses.

“The students that are accepted into the Bauer Family High School Voice Studio receive a unique experience and amazing opportunity,” says HGOco Director Carleen Graham. “In becoming part of the HGO family, they will graduate with an understanding about opera that will position them well when they enter college. Our alumni often say that the Bauer Family High School Voice Studio has made a profound impact on their transition into and success during college.”

HGO is grateful to the Ruth and Ted Bauer Family Foundation, C. T. Bauer Foundation, and Houston Grand Opera Guild Endowment Fund in memory of Ann Craft for their support of this exceptional program.
HGOco Hosts First Community Partner Luncheon

HGOco hosted its first community partner luncheon on May 22 at the Wortham Center. The informal event featured remarks from Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers and HGOco staff, along with performances by Bauer Family High School Voice Studio graduate Alina Dong and pianist Patrick Harvey. There was also a sneak peek excerpt from Katie: The Strongest of the Strong, a new Opera To Go! work due to premiere in fall 2020. Partnerships recognized during the event were Catholic Charities, Houston Methodist, Discovery Green, Buffalo Bayou Partnership, The Courage to Search program (The Women’s Home and Institute for Spirituality & Health), and Harris County Juvenile Probation Program among many others.

Seeking the Human Spirit Concludes “Transformation” Year with Creative Flair

Year two of HGO’s Seeking the Human Spirit (STHS) six-year initiative concluded with a unique event, Transforming the Mind & Spirit: An Exploration of Creativity. Over 20 of Houston’s innovative creators, storytellers, musicians, and thought leaders joined forces for what was the culmination of an eight-month journey on May 20 at MATCH. Inspired by nanomedicine pioneer and entrepreneur Dr. Mauro Ferrari, the evening explored a wide range of creative expression from live painting and creative writing to dance, music, storytelling, and responses to mental health in many vibrant forms.

HGOco FUNDERs

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

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

Anchorage Foundation of Texas BBVA
The Brown Foundation, Inc.
The Wortham Foundation, Inc.
Shell
He might have been born and raised in Scottsdale, Arizona, but new HGO Board of Directors member Tom Ajamie has proudly adopted Houston as his home.

An internationally recognized trial lawyer, Tom is the founder and managing partner of Ajamie LLP and works out of both Houston and New York. He established the Ajamie Scholarship Fund in 1998 to finance education for promising university students who demonstrate tolerance and work to support diversity. He has been an HGO Trustee and subscriber since the 2005–06 season. Tom is a member of the Founders Council for Artistic Excellence and his firm is one of HGO’s cherished corporate partners.

What do you love about Houston?
I love everything. I appreciate the cultural diversity. People of all nationalities, religions, and lifestyles are welcome here. That’s what makes life more interesting, and the food choices better. I started my career here a long time ago, and it’s affordable and business-friendly, with supportive people. It’s not everywhere that a young lawyer can create a law firm that grows to be internationally successful.

Why do you support HGO?
I like to look toward the future—and that embodies the spirit of HGO and the spirit of Houston as a city. HGO’s involvement in the community really impresses me, as does the professionalism of the staff, and the fact that the company is always on the cutting edge of developing new operas. So I became more and more involved.

What else do you like to do?
I’m a supporter of independent films through the Sundance Institute, and I’m a patron of Tribeca Film Festival. I am also a founding member of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and a patron of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and The Museum of Modern Art, New York. I have traveled most of my life, from Asia to Latin America, and Eastern Europe.

What are some of your favorite HGO experiences?
Music, theater, and dance are some of life’s great joys, and they all come together in opera. I enjoy meeting musicians and going on backstage tours, and the Opera Ball is the best event in the city!

TOM AJAMIE

New HGO board member Judy Belanger—Vice Chairman, President, and Co-Founder of Cornerstone Home Lending—loves all things Houston. Judy is a member of the Founders Council for Artistic Excellence, the HGO Finance Committee, and has been an HGO subscriber since 2012. She’s been married for 55 years to her junior high school sweetheart, David—a retired architect.

Do you have a favorite HGO memory?
I took my granddaughter to see The House without a Christmas Tree. She wore a skirt made out of feathers, and she felt so special getting dressed up and going to the opera! It made me feel special too. She was ten years-old, and she loved the production. We had a great evening together.

When you’re not at the Wortham, what do you like to do?
In addition to opera, I’m a big fan of ballet. I have two sons and five grandkids who are the light of my life, so I do a lot of little league baseball, basketball, and soccer. We spend time at our lake house, support all of Houston’s sports teams, and I’m a member of the Forest Club. I also love to read, and I joined InPrint... they give you a great reading list!

What else?
I love my job. What could be better than helping people get homes for the first time? It’s really fun to be a part of a family’s excitement. I just got a distinguished service award from Texas Bankers, and I’m active in industry groups.

What do you love about Houston?
Houston is the most diverse large city, and the most entrepreneurial. It’s a place where your dreams can come true if you work at them and get after it. There are no obstacles to the American dream here. I started a business here, my husband started a business, and my son started a business... but you have to have balance to have a great city, and HGO is part of what makes Houston world class.

What do you want people to know about HGO?
You don’t have to know anything about opera to enjoy it. The HGO family meets you where you are without judgement... whether you’re an expert or brand new to it, they make you feel comfortable. So stay connected, enjoy learning, and share your experience with everyone you know!

JUDY BELANGER
Our newest Young Trustees have a terrific history with HGO: when Nico Roussel, a geomechanicist from France who works for ConocoPhillips, came to his first opera performance in 2014—HGO's season-opener of Verdi's *Otello*—he had no idea that his future wife, Teresa Procter, would be singing to him from the stage!

**How has HGO been a part of your story?**

*Teresa:* Nico’s first opera was my first time on stage at HGO! We have a joke that when you sign up as a Young Patron, you get to date an opera singer. (HGO management neither confirms nor denies this policy.) Five years later, we’re happily married!

**What have been some of your favorite HGO memories?**

*Teresa:* I came from Michigan to study voice under HGO’s Maestro Richard Bado at Rice University, and HGO has been a part of my life ever since. I worked on the HGOco team, appeared in the world premiere of *O Columbia* (HGOco’s 2015 collaboration with NASA), and sang in Opera to Go! productions at schools all over Texas. It was so encouraging being able to teach lessons through music and help build the next generation of arts patrons.

**So what made you decide to join the Young Patrons Circle?**

*Nico:* YPC filled a craving for a high-intensity, high-caliber experience, and I was excited by the arts education programs of HGOco. Sharing the art with the kids and showing them that art isn't just for the elite, it's for everyone—that’s something we want to support.

**What do you do when you’re not at the opera?**

*Teresa:* We love cooking French cuisine together, bicycling, traveling, enjoying the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and playing with our adopted dog. Music is never far away—we hold recitals in our home—with Nico accompanying me on the piano.

**What are you looking forward to next season?**

*Nico:* Everything! For the first year we had season tickets, Teresa was in every opera, so it was an opportunity to invite friends...I’m very happy to sit next to my wife, but I love seeing her up on stage, too.
TAM International is pleased to support the Houston Grand Opera

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact David Krohn, director of development, at 713-980-8685 or dkrohn@hgo.org.

Ticket sales cover only 25% of our annual costs. We rely on you for the rest. We’re counting on you—become an HGO donor today.

As an HGO donor, you will receive exclusive member benefits designed to enhance your opera experience.
While on a brief break from starring as Lorenzo Da Ponte through the course of his life and career in HGO’s 66th world premiere, *The Phoenix*, baritone Thomas Hampson and bass-baritone Luca Pisaroni took to a smaller stage at The Corinthian for our annual Patrons Circle Recital. Accompanied by pianist Geoffrey Loff, the dynamic father and son-in-law duo captivated with an eclectic program from Mozart and Bellini to Cole Porter and a playful rendition of Irving Berlin’s “Anything You Can Do” from *Annie Get Your Gun*. This favorite Patrons Circle benefit and tradition features a different guest artist each year in the midst of their star run on the HGO main stage.
Members of the Impresarios Circle, HGO’s premier donor recognition society of vanguard supporters, took the stage on April 24 to dine with world-renowned guest artist John Caird. The intimate dinner took place on—and offered a sneak peek at—the rotating set for HGO’s 66th world premiere opera, The Phoenix, just days before opening night. Following the three-course dinner on the Alice and George Brown Stage, guests enjoyed a lively discussion with Caird, librettist and director for The Phoenix, led by HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech.

To celebrate the world premiere performance of composer Tarik O’Regan and librettist John Caird’s The Phoenix on April 26, Steak 48 hosted a post-performance celebration of the cast and creative team. HGO lead supporters were welcomed to the innovative steak and seafood restaurant with Steak 48 specialties like lobster grilled cheese, mini crab cakes, sliced NY strip and Maine lobster on a hash brown with black truffle butter, and fresh burrata crostinis. Patrick Summers introduced the cast, led by father and son-in-law duo Thomas Hampson and Luca Pisaroni, who played Lorenzo Da Ponte at different ages in an amazing story of redemption.
Readers of Houston Grand Opera’s Opera Cues magazine are the most desirable prospects for an advertiser’s message.

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For more information on advertising in Opera Cues, call Matt Ross at 713-417-6857.
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.

Robin Angly, Chairman

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

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

ZANE AND BRADY CARRUTH
Brady is the chief executive officer and president of Saratoga Financial Group and is a trustee of The Wortham Foundation, Inc. Zane is the President of Carson Marketing, LLC, with over 25 years of marketing experience. HGO subscribers since the 2012–13 season, Zane and Brady are members of the Founders Council for Artistic Excellence and served as the chairmen of the 2017 Opera Ball. HGO is proud to have Zane on the HGO Board of Directors. She also serves on the Marketing and Communications Committee. In 2016, HGOco presented a world premiere Storybook Opera program based on Zane’s children’s book, The World’s First Tooth Fairy...Ever.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HGO subscribers since the 2013–14 season, Liz and Jack have both committed themselves to cancer research and patient care through their work at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Jack is a member of the HGO Board of Directors and serves on the HGO Studio Committee. Liz and Jack were generous underwriters of HGO’s historic, first-ever Ring cycle and are lead supporters of HGO’s upcoming German repertoire, including last season’s Elektra. Additionally, Liz and Jack chaired the 2018 Opera Ball on April 14, 2018.
HOUSTON ENDOowment, INC.  
HGO is grateful for the longtime leadership support of the Houston Endowment, a private foundation established in 1937 by Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones to improve the quality of life for all Houstonians. Houston Endowment recently supported an expansion of our Opera to Go! program that allows for free performances in underserved communities, schools, and other venues. The Endowment made a historic $5 million grant to HGO in 2007 to help us launch NEXUS, our affordability program.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CLAIRE LIU AND JOSEPH GREENBERG  
Claire and Joe have subscribed to HGO for many seasons and are members of HGO’s Founders Council for Artistic Excellence. Claire serves on the HGO Board of Directors and is chair of the Finance Committee. She is newly retired from LyondellBassell 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
Ancient myths, or Dreamings, handed down for thousands of years through songs, dances, and patterns used in sand paintings and cave drawings, on carvings and for body paint, form the foundation of today’s Australian Aboriginal art movement.

This fall, Booker-Lowe Gallery partners with Australia’s renowned Coo-ee Gallery, to showcase masterworks and new paintings by indigenous artists from down under.

**Spirit Stories**

For the latest on our exhibitions and events:
Visit [www.bookerlowegallery.com](http://www.bookerlowegallery.com)
Email info@bookerlowegallery.com
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Image © the artist and Booker-Lowe Gallery.

Priscilla Napurrula Herbert, Desert Fringe-rush Dreaming, 60” x 42”
many organizations, with particular emphasis on educational organizations including YES Prep and Teach for America. An avid runner, Claire has completed a marathon in all 50 states.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**OPERA AMERICA**

HGO is honored by our longstanding partnership with OPERA America, a New York based service organization that has been providing members with the resources and expertise to advance the art form of opera in North America since 1970. Current OPERA America–supported projects include *We Belong*, an arts-based partnership with several refugee service organizations. HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech is proud to serve on the board of OPERA America.

**The Powell Foundation**

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

**SCHLUMBERGER**

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

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

**DIAN AND HARLAN STAI**

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

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

**JOHN G. TURNER & JERRY G. FISCHER**

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

**VINSON & ELKINS LLP**

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

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

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

**LYNN WYATT**
Lynn’s generosity touches every aspect of HGO. She is a Lifetime Trustee of HGO and serves as the vice chairman of the HGO Board of Directors. She serves as vice-chair of HGO’s Governance Committee and chaired HGO’s Golden Jubilee Gala in 2005. Oscar Wyatt endowed The Lynn Wyatt Great Artist Fund in 2010, honoring Lynn’s service to the company and dedication to bringing the world’s best operatic artists to HGO, and she was the honoree at the 2010 Opera Ball. Lynn and Oscar have been lead supporters of a number of HGO productions and programs, including the multiyear company-wide initiative *Seeking the Human Spirit.*
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AUGUST 25
Theater District Open House, noon–5 p.m. Wortham Theater Center, Alley Theater, Hobby Center, Jones Hall. Free behind-the-scenes experiences, performance previews, and special ticket and subscription offers.

SEPTEMBER 10
HGOco presents Exploring Your Creative Identity, a workshop in creativity for ages 55+. The workshop meets on eight consecutive Tuesday mornings, September 10–October 23, and offers opportunities to discover and cultivate creative practices. $300. Registration is open now; for information visit HGO.org/creativeidentity.

SEPTEMBER 13 & 15
Studio Showcase: The singers and pianists of the HGO Studio perform in a program of opera scenes, Wortham Center’s Cullen Theater, at 7 p.m. on September 13 and 2 p.m. on September 15. Free to season subscribers; nonsubscribers may purchase mezzanine tickets at HGO.org.

SEPTEMBER 29
HGOco presents singers from the Bauer Family High School Voice Studio in a masterclass with an HGO artist. 2 p.m. Free; public invited. Contact Alisa Magallón at amagallon@hgo.org for information.

OCTOBER 1
Opera Night Live: the HGO Guild invites you to the United Way of Greater Houston (50 Waugh Dr.) to enjoy wine and snacks while learning more about Rigoletto from a member of the production team. Starts at 6:30 p.m. Free, but reservations are recommended. For more information, contact the Guild at 713-546-0269 or visit hgoguild.org.

OCTOBER 5
29th Annual Fall Awards Brunch: the HGO Guild honors stellar volunteers and supporters while listening to special performances by HGO Studio Artists. Location TBD. For more information, contact the Guild at 713-546-0269 or visit hgoguild.org.

OCTOBER 18
Opening Night Dinner: HGO celebrates the opening of the 2019–20 season following he performance of Rigoletto. Wortham Theater Center. Drs. Rachel and Warren A. Ellsworth IV, chairs. For more information, contact Brooke Rogers at 713-546-0271 or brogers@hgo.org.

OCTOBER 20
Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about Rigoletto immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

OCTOBER 25–NOVEMBER 8
Performances of Handel’s Saul. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the October 25 performance only.
**OCTOBER 27**
Behind the Music: an intimate conversation about *Saul* immediately following the performance. Masterson Green Room. Free.

**OCTOBER 30**
High School Night: HGOco hosts high school students and their chaperones at a full-length performance of *Verdi’s Rigoletto*. School groups only. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater, 7 p.m. Visit HGO.org/StudentPerformances to reserve.

**NOVEMBER 6**
Joyce DiDonato stars in *In War & Peace—Harmony Through Music*. Concert begins at 7 p.m. in the Wortham Theater Center’s Cullen Theater. Dinner follows at 9 p.m. on the Brown Theater stage. Sara Morgan, chair. For more information, contact Brooke Rogers at 713-546-0271 or brogers@hgo.org.

**DECEMBER 8**

**DECEMBER 9–11**
Student Matinees: HGOco hosts groups of students in grades 4–8 and their chaperones at performances of Javier Martinez and Leonard Foglia’s *El Milagro del Recuerdo/The Miracle of Remembering*. School groups only: reserve online at HGO.org/StudentPerformances.

**DECEMBER 14**
Transforming the Spirit through Song: Join HGO at Discovery Green for a holiday sing-along at 7 p.m.

**DECEMBER 6 & 8**
HGO Studio Recital Series: Artists of the HGO Studio perform in the intimate and elegant salon at Rienzi, the decorative arts wing of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 1406 Kirby Drive. 7:30 p.m.

**DECEMBER 10**

**DECEMBER 14**
Transforming the Spirit through Song: Join HGO at Discovery Green for a holiday sing-along at 7 p.m.

**DECEMBER 26**
Student Matinees: HGOco hosts groups of students in grades 4–8 and their chaperones at performances of *El Milagro del Recuerdo/The Miracle of Remembering*. School groups only: reserve online at HGO.org/StudentPerformances.

**JANUARY 7**
Opera Night Live: the HGO Guild invites you to the United Way of Greater Houston (50 Waugh Dr.) to enjoy wine and snacks while learning more about *La favorite* from a member of the production team. Starts at 6:30 p.m. Free, but reservations are recommended. For more information, contact the Guild at 713-546-0269 or visit hgoguild.org.

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

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

**JANUARY 31 & FEBRUARY 1**
libraries, and community centers January 27–May 22. Book a performance at HGO.org/OperaToGo or by calling 713-546-0231.

**JANUARY 31–FEBRUARY 16**
Performances of Verdi’s *Aida*.
Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the January 31 performance only.

**FEBRUARY**

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

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

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

**MARCH**

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

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

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

**APRIL**

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

**APRIL 7**
Opera Night Live: the HGO Guild invites you to the United Way of Greater Houston (50 Waugh Dr.) to enjoy wine and snacks while learning more about Salome from a member of the production team. Starts at 6:30 p.m. Free, but reservations are recommended. For more information, contact the Guild at 713-546-0269 or visit hgoguild.org.

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

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

**APRIL 24–MAY 8**
Performances of Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*. Wortham Theater Center’s Brown Theater. Special intermission reception for members of Opening Nights for Young Professionals at the April 24 performance only.
**SUMMER 2019**

**April 26**

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

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**May**

**May 7 & 10**

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

**May 9**

HGOco presents the **Bauer Family High School Voice Studio Graduation Recital.** Duncan Recital Hall, Rice University. 6 p.m. Free.

**May 27**

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

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**June 8–26**

**Opera Camp:** One of Houston's most in-demand summer camp series is coming in June 2020! HGOco is proud to announce several unique camps designed for grades K–12, including **Create an Opera, Art of Opera,** and **Sing! Move! Play!** All camps are held at the Wortham Theater Center. For more information, visit HGO.org/community-programs.

*Photo Credits: p. 75: Lynn Lane, Wilson Parish; p. 76: Brooke Shaden, Brian Speck, Lynn Lane; p. 77: Wilson Parish, Smithsonian, Carleen Graham*
Houston Grand Opera offers a wealth of services to enhance your opera experience.

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

HGO’s Customer Care Center is another great resource. For performance information, to purchase or exchange tickets, or to make a donation to HGO, contact the Customer Care Center at 713-228-6737. You can also email customercare@hgo.org. Throughout the season, the Center will be staffed Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. During performance runs, the Center is open until 6 p.m., and on performance days, it is open until curtain time. The Center will be open on Saturdays and Sundays only when there is a performance, from noon until curtain. Hours are subject to change.

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

EXCHANGING YOUR TICKETS
Full-season and mini-package subscribers may exchange their tickets for a different performance of the same opera without fee, subject to availability. Exchanges can be made by phone until the performance begins. Non-subscription single tickets may be exchanged with a service fee of $10 per ticket. When exchanged for tickets of greater value, the customer will be responsible for the difference; no refunds will be made. No exchanges are permitted after the performance has begun.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Parking in the Theater District Parking Garage is $12 on weekends and after 5 p.m. on weekdays. Clearance for trucks and vans is 6’8”.

The recommended entrances for the Theater District Garage are on Prairie or Texas between Bagby and Smith. The recommended entrances for the Alley Theatre Garage are on Smith or Louisiana between Texas and Prairie.
OPENING NIGHT
DINNER CELEBRATION
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2019
7 P.M.

CHAIRMEN
Drs. Rachel and Warren A. Ellsworth IV

Performance of Verdi’s Rigoletto
followed by a celebration dinner on
Ray C. Fish Plaza, Black Tie

CONCERT OF ARIAS
FEBRUARY 7, 2020
7 P.M.

CHAIRMEN
Laura and D. Bradley McWilliams

Vocal competition followed by a
celebration dinner in the Grand Foyer,
Wortham Theater Center, Black Tie

JOYCE DIDONATO
IN WAR & PEACE—
HARMONY THROUGH MUSIC
NOVEMBER 6, 2019
7 P.M.

HONORARY CHAIR
Sara Morgan

Performance in the Cullen Theater
followed by dinner with Ms. DiDonato
on the Brown Stage, Cocktail

OPERA BALL
APRIL 4, 2020
6:30 P.M.

The Wortham Theater Center, White Tie
Keeping ELITE PERFORMERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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