

## HOUSTON GRAND OPERA FACT SHEET

Houston Grand Opera (HGO) is committed to the commissioning and performing of new works (35 world premieres and six American premieres), the development and nurturing of American artists and composers, the imaginative presentation of masterpieces from the traditional operatic repertoire, and to reaching out to new audiences.

Founded in 1955 through the joint efforts of Maestro **Walter Herbert** and Houston cultural leader **Mrs. Louis G. Lobit**, **Houston Grand Opera** flourished under the acclaimed leadership of General Director **David Gockley** from 1972 to 2005. **Anthony Freud**, the esteemed head of Welsh National Opera, started his tenure as HGO's third general director and first CEO in March 2006.

From its modest beginnings—HGO's inaugural season featured a mere two performances of two operas—Houston Grand Opera has grown into a company of international stature, one that presents seven to 10 productions per season. With an annual budget of nearly \$21 million, Houston Grand Opera is one of the nation's largest opera companies and reaches over 5 million people annually.

### WORLD PREMIERES

- **Houston Grand Opera**

- Send (who are you? I love you)*, Michael John LaChiusa, 2006
- Lysistrata, or the Nude Goddess*, Mark Adamo, 2005
- Salsipuedes, a tale of Love, War and Anchovies*, Daniel Catán and Eliseo Alberto/  
Francisco Hinojosa, 2004
- The End of the Affair*, Jake Heggie and Heather McDonald, 2004
- The Little Prince*, Rachel Portman and Nicholas Wright, 2003
- Cold Sassy Tree*, Carlisle Floyd, 2000
- Resurrection*, Tod Machover and Laura Harrington with additional materials by Braham  
Murray, 1999
- Florencia en el Amazonas*, Daniel Catán and Marcela Fuentes-Berain, 1996
- Harvey Milk*, Stewart Wallace and Michael Korie, 1995
- The Outcast* (fully realized version), Noa Ain, 1994
- Desert of Roses*, Robert Moran and Michael John LaChiusa, 1992
- ATLAS: an opera in three parts*, Meredith Monk, 1991
- The Passion of Jonathan Wade* (new version), Carlisle Floyd, 1991
- New Year*, Sir Michael Tippett, 1989
- The Making of the Representative for Planet 8*, Philip Glass and Doris Lessing, 1988
- Nixon in China*, John Adams and Alice Goodman, 1987
- A Quiet Place*, Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Wadsworth, 1983
- Willie Stark*, Carlisle Floyd, 1981
- Bilby's Doll*, Carlisle Floyd, 1976
- The Seagull*, Thomas Pasatieri, 1974

- **Houston Grand Opera Studio**  
*Little Women*, Mark Adamo, 1998  
*Jackie O*, Michael Daugherty and Wayne Koestenbaum, 1997  
*The Tibetan Book of the Dead, a liberation through hearing*,  
Ricky Ian Gordon and Jean-Claude van Itallie, 1996  
*The Dracula Diary*, Robert Moran and James Skofield, 1994
- **Texas Opera Theater**  
*The Achilles Heel*, Craig Bohmler and Mary Carol Warwick, 1993  
*Where's Dick?*, Stewart Wallace and Michael Korie, 1989  
*Starbird*, Henry Mollicone, 1980
- **Opera to Go!**  
*Strega Nona*, Mary Carol Warwick and Mary Ann Pendino, 2006  
*The Princess and the Pea*, Mary Carol Warwick and Mary Ann Pendino, 2005  
*The Velveteen Rabbit*, Mary Carol Warwick and Kate Pogue, 2004  
*Sibanda!*, Michael Remson, 2003  
*The Emperor's New Clothes*, Mary Carol Warwick and Kate Pogue, 2001  
*Cinderella in Spain/Cinderella en España*, Mary Carol Warwick and Kate  
Pogue, 1998  
*Puppy and the Big Guy*, Sterling Tinsley and Kate Pogue, 1995  
*TEXAS!*, Mary Carol Warwick and Kate Pogue, 1993

#### AMERICAN PREMIERES

- **Houston Grand Opera**  
*Akhmaten*, Philip Glass, 1984  
*La Donna del lago* (new critical edition), Gioacchino Rossini, 1981  
*Rinaldo* (stage premiere), George Frideric Handel, 1975  
*Hugh the Drover*, Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1973
- **Houston Opera Studio**  
*The Panther*, Philip Glass, 1981
- **Texas Opera Theater**  
*Robinson Crusoe*, Jacques Offenbach, 1977

#### RECORDINGS, TELEVISION AND RADIO APPEARANCES

- **Audio Recordings**  
*Cold Sassy Tree*, Albany, 2005  
*Of Mice and Men*, Albany, 2004  
*Florencia en el Amazonas*, Albany, 2002  
*Resurrection*, Albany, 2002  
*Little Women*, Ondine, 2001  
*Jackie O*, Argo/Decca, 1997  
*Song of Majnun*, Delos, 1997  
*The Dracula Diary*, Catalyst/BMG, 1994  
*ATLAS: an opera in three parts*, ECM, 1992  
*Nixon in China*, Nonesuch, 1988  
*Treemonisha*, Deutsche Grammophon, 1982  
*Porgy and Bess*, RCA, 1976
- **Nationally Televised Productions**  
*Little Women*, "Great Performances," PBS, August 2001  
*La Cenerentola*, "Great Performances," PBS, April 1996  
*Nixon in China*, "Great Performances," PBS, April 1988

*Aida*, "Great Performances," PBS, October 1987  
*Treemonisha*, PBS, February 1986  
*Willie Stark*, "Great Performances," PBS, October 1981

- **Videocassette Recordings**

*La Cenerentola*, London/Decca, 1996  
*Treemonisha*, Kultur Video, 1982

- **Big Screen Simulcast Performances (Plazacasts)**

Houston Grand Opera's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala (also simulcast via satellite uplink to Miller Outdoor Theatre), April 2005  
*Romeo and Juliet*, April 2005  
*Turandot*, May 2004  
*La Traviata*, May 2003  
*Samson and Delilah*, May 2002  
*Florenca en el Amazonas*, May 2001  
*Nabucco*, May 2000  
*Mefistofele*, May 1999  
*The Marriage of Figaro*, May 1998  
*Hansel and Gretel*, November 1997  
*La Cenerentola*, Fish Plaza, Wortham Theater Center, November 1995

- **Radio Broadcasts**

NPR's *World of Opera* broadcasts HGO's performances nationally, 1999–present  
Australian Broadcast Corporation broadcasts HGO's performances, 2003  
European Broadcast Union broadcasts HGO's performances, 2002–present  
New York City's WQXR broadcasts HGO's performances, 2002–present  
KUHF 88.7FM broadcasts HGO's seasons locally, 1996–1999  
KRTS 92.1FM broadcasts HGO's seasons locally, 1987–1995

## TOURS

- **Houston Grand Opera**

*The Tibetan Book of the Dead, a liberation through hearing*,  
Ricky Ian Gordon and Jean-Claude van Itallie:  
American Music Theater Festival, Philadelphia, 1996  
*Four Saints in Three Acts*, Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein:  
Edinburgh Festival, Scotland; Lincoln Center Festival 96, New York,  
1996  
*Porgy and Bess*, George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward:  
10-company co-production, U.S. tour, 1995; (Osaka, Tokyo, Kyoto) Japan,  
(Milan) Italy, (Paris) France, 1996  
*ATLAS: an opera in three parts*, Meredith Monk: U.S. tour, (Berlin) Germany,  
(Paris) France, 1991  
*Show Boat*, Jerome Kern: (Cairo) Egypt, 1989  
*Nixon in China*, John Adams and Alice Goodman: Edinburgh Festival, 1988  
*Porgy and Bess*, George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward:  
13-company co-production, presented in 17 U.S. cities, 1986-87  
*Show Boat*, Jerome Kern: U.S. tour, 1982-83  
*Hansel and Gretel*, Engelbert Humperdinck: Texas and the Southwest, 1978  
*Of Mice and Men*, Carlisle Floyd: Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 1977  
*Hello Dolly!*, Jerry Herman: U.S. tour, 1977  
*Porgy and Bess*, George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward:  
U.S. tour, Broadway, European tour, 1976  
*El Capitan*, John Philip Sousa: Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 1976  
*Treemonisha*, Scott Joplin: Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; Broadway, 1975

- **Texas Opera Theater**

*Starbird*, Henry Mollicone: Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 1980

## **AWARDS**

- **Emmy Awards**

*Hitting the High Cs*, Marion Kessell and Rick Christie, 1998

*Nixon in China*, John Adams and Alice Goodman, 1987

- **Grammy Awards**

*Nixon in China*, John Adams and Alice Goodman, 1987

*Porgy and Bess*, George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward, 1976

- **Tony Awards**

*Porgy and Bess*, George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward, 1976

- **Grand Prix du Disques**

*Porgy and Bess*, George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward, 1976

## **WORTHAM THEATER CENTER**

In 1987, Houston Grand Opera officially moved to the Wortham Theater Center, HGO's new \$72 million home. The sum was raised entirely from private funds during a major downturn in Houston's economy. In 1997, improvements were made to the Wortham Theater Center that included the addition of 180 seats in the main orchestra section and the expansion and reconfiguration of the orchestra pit. In 2005, a \$2.2 million enlargement of the orchestra pit brought the musicians out from under the lip of the stage.

## **HOUSTON GRAND OPERA STUDIO**

Co-founded in 1977 by HGO General Director David Gockley and composer Carlisle Floyd, Houston Grand Opera Studio is a nationally acclaimed training and performance program dedicated to the advancement of young artists with the potential for major careers in the opera/music theater profession. The program serves as a model for other apprenticeship programs in the United States. Among the distinguished alumni of the Houston Opera Studio who now enjoy major careers are Joyce DiDonato, Ana Maria Martinez, Richard Paul Fink, Bruce Ford, Denyce Graves, Jan Grissom, Eric Halfvarson, John Keyes, Marquita Lister, Susanne Mentzer, Lee Merrill, Erie Mills, Eugene Perry, Herbert Perry, Marietta Simpson, Mark Thomsen, Margaret Jane Wray, Raymond Very and Stella Zambalis. The program is now run by Hector Vásquez (program director) and Kathleen Kelly (music director).

## **BUDGET**

Since 1972, Houston Grand Opera's budget has grown in size from \$420,000 to nearly \$21 million in 2005–2006.

## **THE ELEANOR McCOLLUM COMPETITION FOR YOUNG SINGERS (formerly The Eleanor McCollum Auditions and Awards Program)**

The Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers was established in 1989 to identify young singers and award career development grants to promising young artists. Each year Houston Grand Opera auditions more than 400 singers throughout the United States for the opportunity to compete in Houston for four prestigious awards and cash prizes. Semi-finals are held over the course of three days, followed by three days of intensive auditions and interviews leading to the finals *Concert of Arias* gala evening.

## **THE GENEVIEVE P. DEMME ARCHIVES AND RESOURCE CENTER**

In 1989, Houston Grand Opera became the first performing arts organization in Houston and the second major U.S. opera company to establish its own archives and resource center. The facility preserves valuable materials from throughout the company's 49-year history and is governed by an Archives Advisory Council formed in 1993. The council includes members of the board of Houston Grand Opera Association and nationally prominent archivists. The Archives and Resource Center is named for Genevieve P. Demme, a longtime member of the Board of Trustees and Historian of Houston Grand Opera Association.

## **SURTITLES, SPANISH-LANGUAGE SYNOPSES**

In 1984, Houston Grand Opera began using surtitles on all foreign language productions, becoming one of the first opera companies in the United States to do so. In 1995, Houston Grand Opera began offering Spanish-language synopses at the Guild Boutique for Wortham Theater Center productions.

## **OPERA NEW WORLD PRODUCTIONS**

In 1990, the company affirmed its commitment to new works and audience development with the launch of **Opera New World**, a program made possible through a \$1 million Challenge III Grant by the National Endowment for the Arts.

During the program's ten year history, **Houston Grand Opera** presented 21 productions under the auspices of the program with repertoire as diverse as *The Mother of Three Sons* by **Leroy Jenkins**, **Bill T. Jones** and **Ann T. Greene**; *Little Women* by **Mark Adamo** and *Cold Sassy Tree* by **Carlisle Floyd**.

## **COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS INITIATIVE**

Houston Grand Opera's Community Connections Initiative is a progressive, multi-pronged initiative aimed at moving Houston Grand Opera closer to the center of community life. The initiative, which was launched in the 1996–97 season, was designed to broaden HGO's audience reach and enhance HGO's profile within the community.

Components of the Community Connections Initiative include:

**Plazacasts** — HGO is the only American opera company to produce an annual "live" feed of a mainstage performance each season. Free and open to the public, the opera is projected onto a 22.5' by 30' screen mounted on the outside of the Wortham Theater Center.

**High School Night at the Opera** — evening performances of a main stage production offered exclusively to high school students.

**Opera to Go!** — a collaboration with a local professional touring company to present fully staged "portable" operas in English for children in grades K-7 which reaches over 50,000 students in their schools. HGO and Opera to Go! annually reaches community centers in every Harris County precinct, participates in the Houston Library's Summer Reading Program, produces four productions as part of the Children's Opera Festival at Miller Outdoor Theatre, and presents 20 performances for schools and two public performances in the 300-seat Heinen Theatre.

**Opera Camp** — three weeklong day camps for students. HGO’s Children’s Chorus Director along with other HGO staff teach proper vocal technique, music theory, stage movement, ensemble performance, and other facets of opera stagecraft. The weeks culminate with solo and ensemble performances by the “campers” for the public.

**High School Voice Studio** — students are selected from local auditions, open to seniors attending high school in Harris County, to participate in a yearlong program that includes private weekly voice lessons, a monthly voice class, vocal coachings from HGO staff, and performance recitals. Participants observe masterclasses and coachings with artists, attend off- and on-stage rehearsals, and “shadow” production personnel backstage during performances. At the completion of the year of study participants are presented in an adjudicated recital where scholarships are awarded to the top three finalists. All participants who have met performance standards, receive stipends to assist with college application fees and travel costs for college auditions.