

Arts and Culture

Houston is one of few U.S. cities with resident companies in all four major performing arts — drama, ballet, opera and orchestra.

- The famed Alley Theatre — winner of the 1996 Special Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre — was founded in 1947 and is one of the few American Theatre companies that supports a company of actors, designers, artisans and craftspeople throughout the year. Its facility features an 824-seat thrust main theater and an arena (or thrust) theater that seats as many as 310. On these two stages, the Alley usually presents 11 major productions per season, including *A Christmas Carol*, an annual tradition. The company has toured 40 U.S. cities and abroad. Alley productions are built and rehearsed in the state-of-the-art Alley Theatre Center for Theatre Production, a 75,000-square-foot facility that is and one of the largest and most complete facilities of its kind anywhere. The Alley is also home to educational programs for children and youth, including From Stage to Page, HYPE (Houston Young Playwrights Exchange) and Playwright 360°.
- Houston Ballet, founded in 1955 and established as a professional company in 1969, is the nation's fourth-largest ballet company, with annual operating expenses of more than \$20 million and 53 dancers, many of whom have won gold, silver and bronze medals at major international competitions. Houston Ballet has toured to critical praise in Europe, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Orient (including the People's Republic of China) and cities throughout the United States. The company presents more than 75 performances eight months per year in Wortham Theater Center.
- The internationally renowned Houston Grand Opera (HGO), founded in 1955, has been honored with a Tony, two Grammy awards and two Emmy awards. Known worldwide for the balance between contemporary works and classics in its repertoire, HGO enjoys a reputation for commissioning and producing new works — 39 world and six U.S. premieres since 1973, including three world premieres in the 2004-2005 season — and has toured extensively, including trips to Japan, Italy, Egypt, Scotland and France. HGO performances have been broadcast nationally on National Public Radio's World of Opera since 1999 and are now carried by New York City's WQXR, the European Broadcasting Union and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. HGO has broadcasted on the WFMT Radio Network, the international syndication division of award-winning classical music station 98.7WFMT, since September 2007.
- The Houston Symphony, founded in 1913, has an annual budget of more than \$24 million and maintains an internationally acclaimed orchestra of 90 full-time musicians. Some 350,000 attend its season of more than 170 classical, pops, educational and family concerts. The symphony's free summer concerts at Miller Outdoor Theatre have been a tradition since 1940. The symphony devotes about \$1 million per year to educational outreach programs, most of which are offered free or at a nominal cost. The symphony's long tradition of touring in recent years has included Europe, Japan, Singapore and many U.S. cities.
- Theatre Under The Stars offers lavish musical theater productions, both new works and revivals, in a winter subscription season and in popular free summer productions at Hermann Park's Miller Outdoor Theatre.
- The Ensemble Theatre, established in 1976, is one of the only professional theaters in the Southwest devoted to the African-American experience and offers two stages and a full season of productions.