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**A.R.T. ANNOUNCES MAJOR CASTING FOR
THE GERSHWINS' PORGY AND BESS:
AUDRA McDONALD
NORM LEWIS & DAVID ALAN GRIER**

Cambridge, Mass — The American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) is pleased to announce that **Norm Lewis, Audra McDonald, and David Alan Grier** are joining the A.R.T. to play Porgy, Bess, and Sportin' Life in the A.R.T.'s new production of **The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess**. Performances will begin August 17 at the Loeb Drama Center in Cambridge. Further casting will be announced at a later date.

Gershwin's seminal American opera **Porgy and Bess** is being re-imagined by A.R.T.'s Artistic Director *Diane Paulus*, Pulitzer prize-winning writer *Suzan-Lori Parks*, and two-time Obie winner *Diedre Murray*. The creative team was charged by the Gershwin Trusts and the Heyward Trust to create a version with a unique identity as a musical. The team also includes choreographer *Ronald K. Brown*, set designer *Riccardo Hernandez*, costume designer *Emilio Sosa*, Tony Award-winning lighting designer *Christopher Akerlind*, sound by *Acme Sound Partners*, and casting by *Telsey + Company*. This production of **The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess** will be presented in association with Jeffrey Richards and Jerry Frankel.

Norm Lewis recently played Javert in *Les Miserables* at London's West End, a role he also played on Broadway and for which he received a Drama League nomination. Other Broadway roles include *Sondheim on Sondheim* (recording has just been released), King Triton in *The Little Mermaid*, Billy Flynn in *Chicago*, Jake in *Side Show*, John in *Miss Saigon*, as well as roles in *The Wild Party*, *Amour*, and he was in the original cast of *Tommy*. Off-Broadway he was seen as Nathan in *Dessa Rose* (Drama Desk nomination, AUDELCO Award), Valentine in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Drama League nomination), Doc in *Captains Courageous*, and Roger in *A New Brain*. Regional credits include Coalhouse in *Ragtime*, Sweeney in *Sweeney Todd*, El Gallo in *The Fantastics*. He appeared in concert for The Actors' Fund concerts of *Chess* (Molokov), *Dreamgirls* (Curtis), and *HAIR. Children of Eden* (Father), *Bright Lights Big City* (Tad), *Golden Boy* (Eddie) for City Center Encores! Film and television includes *Sex and the City 2*, *Preaching to the Choir*, *Confidences*, *Mystery Woman*, *Cosby*, *Strong Medicine*, *All My Children*, *As The World Turns*. His debut solo CD is entitled "Norm Lewis: This is the Life."

Audra McDonald has appeared on the stage in both musicals and dramas, such as *Ragtime* and *A Raisin in the Sun*, and is the recipient of four Tony Awards and two Grammy Awards. She maintains an active concert and recording career, performing song cycles and operas as well as performing in concert throughout the US. She has won the Tony

Award four times and Grammy Award twice. McDonald became a three-time Tony Award winner by the age of 28 — for her performances in *Carousel*, *Master Class*, and *Ragtime*. She was nominated for another Tony Award for her performance in *Marie Christine* before she won her fourth in 2004 for her role in *A Raisin in the Sun*. She reprised her *Raisin* role for a 2008 television adaptation, earning her a second Emmy Award nomination. McDonald appeared as Lizzie in the Roundabout Theatre Company's 2007 revival of *110 in the Shade*, for which she shared the Drama Desk Award for Best Actress in a Musical with Donna Murphy. She frequently performs in concert throughout the US and has performed with musical institutions such as the New York Philharmonic and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Carnegie Hall commissioned the song cycle *The Seven Deadly Sins: A Song Cycle* for McDonald, and she performed it at Carnegie's Zankel Hall in 2004. She sang in Francis Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine* and the world premiere of Michael John LaChiusa's *Send (who are you? I love you)* at Houston Grand Opera, and in Kurt Weill's opera *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* at LA Opera (the resulting recording won two Grammy Awards, for Best Opera Recording and Best Classical Album in 2009). Her television roles include the ABC television drama *Private Practice* as Dr. Naomi Bennett, the HBO film *Wit* (Emmy Award nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a miniseries), *Homicide: Life on the Street*, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years*, *The Bedford Diaries*, and *Kidnapped*, and the 1999 television remake of *Annie* as Daddy Warbucks' secretary & soon-to-be wife, Miss Farrell. Her films include *Best Thief in the World*, *It Runs in the Family*, *The Cradle Will Rock*, *The Object of My Affection*, and *Seven Servants*. McDonald has recorded four solo albums for Nonesuch Records, including *Way Back to Paradise*, *How Glory Goes*, *Happy Songs*, and *Build a Bridge*.

David Alan Grier trained in Shakespeare and received an MFA from the Yale School of Drama. He has since received two Tony Award nominations and has been named one of Comedy Central's "100 Greatest Stand-ups of All Time". Grier began his professional career on Broadway as Jackie Robinson in *The First*, for which he earned a Tony Award nomination for Best Featured Actor in a Musical and won the Theatre World Award. He then joined the cast of *Dreamgirls* before going on to star opposite Denzel Washington in *A Soldier's Play*, for which both actors reprised their roles in the film adaptation titled *A Soldier's Story*. He appeared in Robert Altman's *Streamers* and won the Golden Lion for Best Actor at the Venice Film Festival (1983). Recently was seen in David Mamet's *Race* on Broadway and received his second Tony Award nomination. Grier's television work is highlighted by a turn as principal cast member on the Emmy Award winning *In Living Color* (1990-1994) where he helped to create some of the show's most memorable characters. He was a cast member in the series *DAG* and *Life with Bonnie* (Image and Golden Satellite nomination); wrote and executive produced a show for Comedy Central called *Chocolate News* in 2008, and appeared on ABC's *Dancing with the Stars* in 2009. Grier's first book, *BARACK LIKE ME: The Chocolate Covered Truth* was published in 2009, and he just wrapped filming the comedy *We the Peeples*, set for release in 2011.

The American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) is one of the country's most celebrated resident theaters and the winner of numerous awards including the Tony Award, the Pulitzer Prize and regional Elliot Norton and I.R.N.E. Awards. In 2002 the A.R.T. was the recipient of the National Theatre Conference's Outstanding Achievement Award, and in May of 2003 it was named one of the top three regional theaters in the country by *Time* magazine.

In 2009, the A.R.T. welcomed its new Artistic Director, Diane Paulus. Armed with the A.R.T.'s mission to expand the boundaries of theater, Paulus and her team have engaged thousands of new theatergoers at performances of *Sleep No More*, *The Donkey Show*, *Gatz*, *Best of Both Worlds*, *Johnny Baseball* and *Cabaret* as well as festivals like *Emerging America*.

Critics and audiences have embraced the immersive environments that have become hallmarks of A.R.T. productions. The Theater has broadened its focus to include the audience's total experience, providing them with a sense of ownership in the theatrical event. The A.R.T.'s new club theater OBERON, which Paulus calls a "second stage for the 21st century," is an example of one initiative that has not only become an incubator for local artists but also has attracted national attention as a groundbreaking model for programming. Through all of its work, the A.R.T. is committed to building a community of artists, designers, technicians, administrators and audience.

The Loeb Drama Center, located at 64 Brattle Street, Harvard Square, Cambridge, is accessible to persons with special needs and to those requiring wheelchair seating or first-floor restrooms. Deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons can also reach the theater by calling the toll-free N.E. Telephone Relay Center at 1-800-439-2370.

The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess opens the 2011-12 American Repertory Theater season, and subscriptions will be available for sale in May. Select tickets for **Porgy and Bess** will go on sale on April 28.

For further information call 617-547-8300 or visit <http://www.americanrepertorytheater.org>
