



American Repertory Theater
64 brattle street, cambridge, massachusetts 02138
617.495.2668 TEL
617.495.1705 FAX
617.547.8300 TICKETS
www.americanrepertorytheater.org

For immediate Release April 15, 2011

Contact: Kati Mitchell 617-496-2000x8841

kati_mitchell@harvard.edu

**American Repertory Theater Announces
Company Casting for
The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess
Co-starring Joshua Henry as Jake • Phillip Boykin as Crown •
Trista Dollison as Clara
Opening the A.R.T.'s 2011-12 Season**

Cambridge, Mass — A.R.T. American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) is pleased to announce the full Company for its production of *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*, opening the A.R.T.'s 2011-2 season on August 14 at the Loeb Drama Center. *The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess*, by George Gershwin, DuBose and Dorothy Heyward, and Ira Gershwin, is adapted by **Suzan-Lori Parks** and **Diedre Murray**, and directed by A.R.T. Artistic Director **Diane Paulus**.

In addition to the already announced leads — **Norm Lewis** as Porgy, **Audra McDonald** as Bess, and **David Alan Grier** as Sportin' Life — the *Porgy and Bess* Company will feature *Scottsboro Boys* star **Joshua Henry** as Jake, opera veteran **Phillip Boykin** as Crown, and newcomer **Trista Dollison** as Clara, who sings the timeless classic "Summertime".

Additional Company members include **Bryonha Marie Parham** as Serena, **NaTasha Yvette Williams** as Maria, **Cedric Neal** as Frazier, **J.D. Webster** as Mingo, **Heather Hill** as Lily, **Phumzile Sojola** as Peter, and **Nathaniel Stampley** as Robbins. The ensemble includes **Allison Blackwell**, **Roosevelt Andre Credit**, **Trevon Davis**, **Rosharra J'Nae Francis**, **Alicia Hall Moran**, **Rocklin Thompson**, and **Lisa Nicole Wilkerson**.

Phillip Boykin (Crown) has performed the role of Crown in *Porgy and Bess* internationally, most recently in Australia and New Zealand, toured with "Golden Gospel Singers" and the "Harlem Gospel Singers" throughout Europe, and was featured soloist with the "Spiritual Singers of Harlem" annual Asian tour. He toured nationally as Joe in *Show Boat*, sang in *Black Nativity* at the Kennedy Center, performed as a guest soloist with the Hartt School Chorus and Orchestra at Lincoln Center in the Alice Tully Hall. Other guest appearances include Connecticut Opera Express, Connecticut Concert Opera, Hartford Symphony, Bristol Symphony, New Britain Symphony, Cleveland Pops and the Greenville Symphony.

Trista Dollison (Clara) appeared on Broadway in *The Lion King*; off Broadway in *Morgan Street*, and regionally in *The Big V-day* and *Cabaret* at Barrington Stage; *Footloose* and *Into the Woods* at Florida Southern College. She also performed in several operas during her training at Florida Southern College.

Joshua Henry (Jake) was most recently seen on Broadway as Haywood Patterson in *The Scottsboro Boys - the Musical*. Other Broadway credits include *Favorite Son* in the Tony nominated rock musical *American Idiot* and the Tony Award-winning musical *In the Heights*, which earned him the Drama Desk award for Outstanding Ensemble Performance. He appeared Off-Broadway in *The Wiz* and in *In the Heights*. Regional credits include *American Idiot* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and *Godspell* at Paper Mill Playhouse.

Heather Hill (Lily) opera credits include *Moby-Dick* at Dallas Opera, *L'elisir d'amore* and *Semiramide* at Caramoor Summer Festival, *Porgy and Bess* for the European/Australian tour-Harlem Productions, Dicapo Opera, *La Sonnambula*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* with Opera Colorado, and *L'enfant et les Sortilèges* at New Jersey Opera Theater. She has also performed in a number of concerts.

Cedric Neal (Frazier) regional credits include *A Christmas Carol*, *Henry IV. It's a Bird, It's a Plane...It's Superman*, *Death of a Salesman*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Who's Tommy* (Rabin Award), *Lost In The Stars*, *A Dog's Life*, *Porgy And Bess* (Austin Critics Circle Award), *Ain't Nothin' But The Blues*, *Brief History of White Music*, *The Life*, *Aida*, *The Normal Heart*, *Tick, tick...BOOM*, *Crowns*, *Ain't Misbehavin.'* Television credits include *The Good Guys*, *Chase*, and *Friday Night Lights*. He is a member of the Brierley Resident Acting Company-Dallas Theater Center.

Bryona Marie Parham (Serena) was seen in the revival of *Ragtime* on Broadway as well as at the Kennedy Center. Other regional credits include *For the Glory/Civil War*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Crowns*, *Once on This Island*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Kiss Me Kate*, and *Chicago/Seussical*.

Nathaniel Sampley (Robbins) credits include *The Lion King* on Broadway and the West End, *The Color Purple* on Broadway, and the national tour of *Ragtime*. Regionally he was seen in *Abyssinia* at the North Shore Music Theatre, *Pacific Overtures* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, *Lost in the Stars* at NY City Center's Encores!, and *One Touch of Venus* at Auditorium Theatre's Ovation! Series; *Once on This Island* and *Big River* (Joseph Jefferson Award nomination) at Apple Tree Theatre; and *Showboat* at Sacramento Music Circus.

Phumzile Sojola (Peter) was seen off-Broadway and on tour in *Three Mo Tenors*. Opera credits include *L'étoile* and *Troubled Island* at New York City Opera; *Porgy & Bess* at Edinburgh Festival, Opera National de Lyon, New York Harlem Theater; *La Bohème* with Missouri Symphony Orchestra; *Carmen* and *Die Zauberflöte* with Dayton Opera; *Death in Venice* with Glimmerglass Opera, and *La Traviata* at Cincinnati Opera.

J.D. Webster (Mingo) was seen on Broadway in *Wonderful Town*, *Ragtime*, and *Show Boat*. Other New York credits include *Two Gentlemen of Verona* at NYSF, *17 Encores!* at City Center, *Bernstein's Mass*, *South Pacific*, *Ira Gershwin at 100*, and *Spring is Here* at Carnegie Hall. His regional credits include *Avenue X*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Gospel*, *An American in Paris*, *The Blackamoor Angel*, *Violet*, *Jam and Spice*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Finian's Rainbow*, and *The Desert Song*.

NaTasha Yvette Williams (Maria) Broadway credits include *The Color Purple* and *Dessa Rose*. She played the role of Mammy in Trevor Nunn's production of *Gone With the Wind* at London's West End. She toured nationally in *Xanadu*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *All Shook Up*, *Seussical the Musical*, and *Cinderella*. Regional credits include *Hairspray*, *Ain't Misbehavin.'* *Abyssinia*, and the title role of *Mahalia* at the Cleveland Playhouse, She has been a featured soloist with a number of orchestras nationwide.

Brief biographies of the ensemble members:

Allison Blackwell performed in *The Lion King* in Las Vegas, *Ragtime* at Paper Mill Theatre, *Caroline*, or *Change* at TheatreWorks (2008 San Francisco Bay Area Critics Circle Award winner for Best Supporting Actress), *A Little Night Music* and *Nunsense* at Sacramento Music Circus, *Hairspray* and *Les Miserables* at North Shore Music Theatre, among others. Concert appearances include *Show Boat* at Carnegie Hall.

Roosevelt Andre Credit's credits include *Show Boat* on Broadway and national tour. Off Broadway he was seen in *Marie Christine* and *The Prince and the Pauper*. Regional credits include *Ragtime*, *For The People*, *Voice From Within*. Concert performances include Duke Ellington's *Sacred Service* at Jazz at Lincoln Center; Schubert's *Mass* at Carnegie Hall); *Basically Bach Festival*, *Fauré's Requiem*, *Bach's St. John Passion*, and *Handel's Messiah*.

Trevon Davis's credits include *Dreamgirls* at the Apollo Theater/National Broadway Tour, *Black Voices: The Struggle Continues* at The Urban Theatre Company of Atlanta. On television he was seen on *BET's Sunday Best Season 1* (Top 7 Finalist), *MTV's Making the Band 4* (Atlanta Finalist; New York City Contestant).

Rosharra J'Nae Francis was seen in New York in *Parade* at The Secret Theater; *Smokey Joe's Cafe* and *Cabaret* at The Palladium Theater Initiative, St. Petersburg Florida; *On the Town*, *Hairspray*, and *Rusalka* with the Vocal Arts Symposium, Colorado Springs; and *The Tenderland*, *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *Sweeney Todd* at NYU.

Alicia Hall Moran's theater credits include *Jenny* in *The Threepenny Opera*, *The Motown Project*, and *Things of the Heart*. Concert performances include *Jazz@Lincoln Center*, *Kennedy Center*. She collaborated with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company's *Chapel/Chapter* (US/Europe, Bessie Award for Musical Collaboration) and *Time and Milestone* (US/Europe), among others.

Rocklin Thompson's credits include *Evita*, *Aida*, *All Shook Up*, *Unchain My Heart* (Warren Moseley), *Purlie*, *Prelude to A Kiss*, *Can-Can*, and *Berry Gordy's Aint No Mountain High Enough*. On the operatic stage he was seen in *Aida*, *Falstaff*, and *The Merry Widow*.

Lisa Nicole Wilkerson played Nala in the national tour of *The Lion King* and Ali in the national tour of *Mamma Mia!*. Regional credits include *Abyssinia*, *Once on This Island*, *Godspell*, *River Deep: Tribute to Tina Turner*, and *Purlie*. Television and film credits include *The Tony Awards 2008*, *The Today Show*, *Oprah*, *Jay Leno*, and *Unconditional Love*.

Set design is by **Riccardo Hernandez** (*Il Postino* at LA Opera and Washington Opera, numerous productions at A.R.T.), costume design by Project Runway finalist **Emilio Sosa**, lighting design by **Christopher Akerlind** (Tony Award for *The Light in the Piazza*; *The Seagull*, *Britannicus* and others at A.R.T.), sound by **Acme Sound Partners**, and casting by **Telsey + Company**. This production of **The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess** is being presented in association with Jeffrey Richards and Jerry Frankel.

The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess begins performances on August 17, opens for the press on August 31, and runs through September 30. The production opens the A.R.T.'s 2011-12 Season; select single tickets and subscriptions for the season will be available from April 28.

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