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


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 Ovations! 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 Gershwins' Porgy and Bess* is being presented in association with Jeffrey Richards and Jerry Frankel.

*The Gershwins' 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.americanreperatorytheater.org](http://www.americanreperatorytheater.org)