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DAZZLING 75TH ANNIVERSARY PRODUCTION OF GEORGE GERSHWIN'S QUINTESSENTIAL
AMERICAN OPERA **PORGY AND BESS** HITS 26 CITIES IN THE US STARTING FEBRUARY 18, 2010

Love and Squalor Return to Steamy Catfish Row

To the Strains of "Summertime," "I Got Plenty of Nuttin," "Bess, You Is My Woman," & "It Ain't Necessarily So"

December 3, 2009, New York City—To celebrate the 75th anniversary of George Gershwin's enduring masterpiece, a new production of *Porgy and Bess* is being mounted—with the full approval of the Gershwin estate—by veteran opera producer **Michael Capasso** (General Director of New York's vibrant Dicapo Opera). *Porgy and Bess*, featuring a stellar cast and live orchestra, will be directed by renowned American **Charles Randolph-Wright** (writer and director of the film "Mama I Want to Sing," to be released February 2010), conducted by Music Director **Pacien Mazzagatti**, and produced in association with **Willette Murphy Klausner**. With a new orchestration by Mr. Mazzagatti, brand-new sets designed by **John Farrell**, costumes by **Ildikó Márta Debreczeni**, and lighting by **Susan Roth**, *Porgy and Bess* kicks off its 26-U.S. city tour February 18, 2010 in Van Wert, Ohio.

(See Page Four for Complete Tour Schedule)

Michael Capasso, who has been the driving force behind the myriad projects produced by Dicapo Opera Theatre, extols the virtues of *Porgy and Bess*:

Irresistible in its melodies, moving in its depiction of love's power in the face of all odds, *Porgy and Bess* stands before the world as the greatest opera ever written by a native-born American. It has long been a dream of mine to produce this quintessentially American operatic classic, and I hope and trust that audiences all across the country will share my enthusiasm for this new production of George Gershwin's true masterpiece.

Passion, jealousy, murder, poverty, make up the heady brew of this evocative story. Porgy, a downtrodden but generous beggar, haunts the streets known as "Catfish Row," a poor district of early 20th century segregated Charleston, South Carolina. Ardently in love with the prostitute Bess, Porgy has to share his affections with her violent former lover Crown and the roguish suitor Sportin' Life. Written by George Gershwin to a libretto by DuBose Heyward and Ira Gershwin, *Porgy and Bess* has enjoyed spectacular fame all over the world since its first modest production in New York City October 1935. This operatic masterpiece has spawned a string of hit songs that have become international icons of the American tradition.

Although Gershwin had hoped for *Porgy and Bess* to be premiered at the Metropolitan Opera, his plans were thwarted by the sudden death of Metropolitan Opera Board Chairman Otto Kahn. The opera toured Europe and North and South America throughout the

1950s, and it was the first work by an American to be produced at La Scala in Milan, Italy. It enjoyed tremendous success at the Vienna Volksoper, Leningrad's Palace of Culture, and London's Stoll Theatre, and it was this tour that launched the career of Leontyne Price. In its 75-year history, no other opera or musical has employed more African-Americans. The work was not widely accepted in the United States as "real" opera until 1976 when the Houston Grand Opera staged *Porgy and Bess* with the original score and orchestration. Nine years later, the Met gave its first performance of the work, including it in its Saturday afternoon live broadcast series.

In November 2009 Dicapo entered the "Opera Competition and Festival with Mezzo," held in cooperation with Hungary's Mezzo Television in Szeged, Hungary, with a production of Tobias Picker's acclaimed opera *Emmeline*, which had received accolades from the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*. Last year, Dicapo Opera Theatre won the 2008 Mezzo competition with its production of Robert Ward's *The Crucible*; competing against France's Opéra de Rennes, Germany's Bremen Theater, Poland's Baltic Opera, and Hungary's Szeged National Theatre.

A devotee of the music of Puccini, Mr. Capasso has directed every single opera by the composer, including 100th anniversary performances of all three versions of the opera (Milan, Brescia, Paris) in one weekend at the Dicapo -- the first time such a project was ever presented. He has also directed Verdi's *La Traviata*, *Il Trovatore*, *Rigoletto*, and *Falstaff*; plus such 20th century composers as Poulenc and Kurt Weill. Mr. Capasso continues Dicapo's ambitious 2009/2010 season with the New York premiere of Thomas Pasatieri's *The Hotel Casablanca*; the world premiere of *Il Caso Mortara* by Francesco Cilluffo (commissioned by Dicapo), the American premiere of Donizetti's *Requiem*., and a concert entitled "Italian-American Composers of the 20th Century,"

In addition to his work with the Dicapo Opera Theatre, Mr. Capasso has directed operas at the Toledo Opera, Connecticut Opera, New Jersey State Opera, Opera at Florham, Augusta Opera, Opera Carolina, Montreal Opera, and Orlando Opera. He also founded the National Lyric Opera in 1991, which brings fully-staged operas to thousands in the Northeast who would otherwise not have the opportunity to experience opera live. Mr. Capasso is also a writer and his credits include an adaptation of Dickens's "A Christmas Carol," which the Today Show hailed as "the best Christmas Carol in New York;" "Opera Senza Rancor," a satirical take on the world of opera; a new libretto for *La Périchole*; translation librettos for *Die Fledermaus* and *The Daughter of the Regiment*; as well as a concert/lecture series for the New York Historical Society. Mr. Capasso's film on the life and career of Enrico Caruso, which he wrote and produced, was aired on the A&E network's "Biography" series and is available on DVD.

Mr. Capasso has received numerous awards: the Licia Albanese/Puccini Foundation's Lifetime Achievement Award, a proclamation from the City of New York in conjunction with the Italian Heritage and Culture Month, and the Leonardo Da Vinci Award for Cultural Achievement. He has appeared twice on the popular intermission quiz of the Metropolitan Opera live broadcasts on WQXR Saturday afternoons. Most recently, Mr. Capasso was named "Man of the Year" by the Italian Welfare League and received a Special Lifetime Achievement Award in the Arts from the Order Sons of Italy in America.

In the world of cultural arts and entertainment, producer **Willette Murphy Klausner** has cultivated a reputation for being a creative and undaunted entrepreneurial spirit. A graduate of UCLA, Ms. Klausner was the first African American in fashion merchandising at

New York retail giant, Bloomingdales, and the first woman to be appointed as corporate VP for MCA Universal Studios. She was one of the original producers of the highly acclaimed *Three Mo' Tenors*, and for the past six years has been the show's sole producer. Featuring classically-trained African American tenors, *Three Mo' Tenors* has thrilled audiences at home and abroad with their phenomenal vocal versatility for the past nine years. Ms. Klausner is especially determined to ensure the place of the African American tenor in the forefront of the world of opera.

As a producer with her companies Edgework Productions and WMK Productions, Klausner has produced a number of critically acclaimed theatrical stage productions on both the east and the west coasts. She is currently co-producing the Broadway-bound musical "Twist," an American version of *Oliver Twist*, and has co-produced regional versions of the show at both the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia and the George Street Playhouse in New Brunswick, New Jersey. She was a co-producer of the Broadway musical "Kat and the Kings," and in Los Angeles, Klausner produced "Fully Committed," "To Take Arms" starring Hattie Winston and Sanaa Lathan, and co-produced "Hurlyburly" starring Sean Penn and Danny Aiello.

Klausner is married to attorney Manuel S. Klausner. They are co-founding members of the American Institute of Wine and Food. Together, they have traveled to over 50 countries and they have been featured in many articles on food and wine.

Charles Randolph-Wright has built a dynamic and diversified career in directing, writing, and producing for theatre, television, and film. Mr. Randolph-Wright has written and directed the film "Mama, I Want to Sing," based on the renowned stage musical, which will be released commercially in movie theatres in February 2010, starring Lynn Whitfield, Ciara, Patti LaBelle, Hill Harper, Ben Vereen, and Billy Zane. Randolph-Wright also directed the television series "Lincoln Heights" (ABC Family) as well as the musical "They're Playing Our Song," in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil.

Other theatre credits include "Love Life" with Brian Stokes Mitchell at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts; the 50th anniversary tour of "Guys and Dolls," starring Maurice Hines; and "Blue" with Phylicia Rashad, which broke box office records in its premiere at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., the Roundabout Theatre in New York City, and at the Pasadena Playhouse (also starring Diahann Carroll and Clifton Davis). He directed "Emergency," with Daniel Beaty at the Geffen Theatre; "Blood Knot," with music by Tracy Chapman; "Act," the world premieres of "Senior Discretion Himself" at the Arena Stage; "Tough Titty" at the Williamstown Theatre Festival; and "Me and Mrs. Jones" at the Prince Theatre.

Randolph-Wright is also a prolific writer; his latest play "The Night is a Child," starring Jobeth Williams, recently premiered at the Pasadena Playhouse. He also wrote "Cuttin' Up," which has been produced throughout the United States, and co-wrote "Just Between Friends," starring Bea Arthur on Broadway. He directed and co-wrote "The Diva is Dismissed," with Jenifer Lewis, at the New York Shakespeare Festival and "Homework," with Kim Coles at the Coast Playhouse, in Los Angeles. Film credits include directing the award-winning "Preaching to the Choir," and writing screenplays for Showtime, HBO, Disney, Castle Rock, and Fox.

Heralded by *Opera News* as "clearly a name to watch," conductor **Pacien Mazzagatti** has already garnered considerable critical acclaim for his work conducting opera both in the United States and abroad. Mr. Mazzagatti made his conducting debut at New York's Dicapo Opera Theatre in 2003 leading performances of Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. He was immediately re-engaged and over

the course of next two seasons he conducted *Madama Butterfly*, *Falstaff*, *The Magic Flute*, *La traviata*, and the New York premiere of Robert Ward's *Claudia Legare*. Most notably in 2005 he led the Dicapo orchestra, the combined Fairfield Chorale, Amor Artis and Dicapo choirs and soloists from the Bolshoi and Metropolitan Opera in a performance of Rachmaninoff's choral symphony *The Bells* and his seldom-heard opera *Francesca da Rimini*. In his review for *The New York Times* Bernard Holland remarked "The chorus sent out warm gales of sound...The orchestra was bathed in a lovely indeterminate haze...The young Pacien Mazzagatti conducted all of these people with energy and considerable effect."

During the 2007-08 season Mr. Mazzagatti led the first performance in Warsaw in over 60 years of George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. He also performed *Porgy and Bess* with the Russian Philharmonic in Moscow's International House of Music and at St. Petersburg's historic Mikhailovsky Theater.

In the autumn of 2008 he traveled to Szeged, Hungary to conduct the Hungarian premiere of Robert Ward's *The Crucible* for the Mezzo International Opera Competition and Festival. This production premiered in New York at Dicapo Opera Theatre to rave reviews in the New York press. The performances in Hungary were broadcast to thirty-eight countries across Europe on the French television network Mezzo.

In December of 2008 he conducted the Opera Orchestra of New York with opera stars Veronica Villaroel and Fabio Armiliato in a gala in Lincoln Center's Rose Hall in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Giacomo Puccini's birth.

John Farrell, Set Design, is the resident designer for Dicapo Opera Theatre where he has created over 50 productions since 1992. Mr. Farrell has also designed for Brooklyn Academy of Music, Naked Angels, The Juilliard School, One Dream, The Directors' Company, AMAS Repertory Theatre, Theatreworks USA, The Arclight, The John Houseman and The Douglas Fairbanks Theater. In Mexico City, Mr. Farrell has done two productions for Morris Gilbert: *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Besame Mucho*. Across the United States, some notable productions include *Sacco and Vanzetti* at the Tampa Opera, *La Vie en Bleu* at The Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, *The Summer of '69* off-Broadway in New York, and *Dodsworth* at Casa Mañana in Texas. Mr. Farrell has been the exclusive Set and Illusion Designer for the Magician Criss Angel since 1993, overseeing four seasons of "Mindfreak" for A&E and a live show at the Luxor Casino in Las Vegas.

Susan Roth, Lighting Designer, designs for a number of regional opera companies in the U.S. Recent opera designs include *Aida* for Tampa Opera, *Rigoletto* for Augusta Opera and *Carmen* with Denyce Graves, for Orlando Opera. Ms. Roth is resident designer for Dicapo Opera Theatre in New York, where her recent work includes *Falstaff* and *La Traviata*. National theater tour credits include *Dreamgirls*, *Cabaret*, *Purlie* and the first U.S. tours of *Little Shop of Horrors* and *One Mo Time*. Ms. Roth also designed the U.S. premier of *Public Enemy*, a play by Kenneth Branagh, at the Irish Arts Center; *West Side Story* and *Crazy for You* at the Westbury Music Fair, and the world premiere of *Feau Follet* for the Elisa Monte-Dance Company.

Ildikó Márta Debreczeni has been designing the costumes for the Experidance Company for 10 years and she has been working in her profession for 22 years. Her company's offices are in Budapest and Szolnok, where her team of 25 people works for several Hungarian theatres, including the Hungarian National Theatre, Comedy Theatre of Budapest, Madách Theatre and the Operetta

Theatre. In 2008 she was the clothes designer for the most popular talent-spotting competition in Hungary, but it was the Opera Competition and Festival, by Mezzo's invitation, that provided her professional breakthrough in 2007. She has a three year contract to make all the costumes for these international productions. In addition to this, she is making costumes for numerous German opera houses, was requested to make costumes for the Bayreuth Festival, and has work in Norway and Italy.

The following is the schedule for the 2010 tour of *Porgy & Bess* (theater and ticket information TBA):

February 18: Van Wert, OH
February 19-21: Columbus, OH
February 23: Portsmouth, OH
February 24: Cincinnati, OH
February 26-27: Overland Park, KS
March 2-4: Fort Worth, TX
March 5: San Antonio, TX
March 6: Galveston, TX
March 7-8: Lafayette, LA
March 9: Oxford, MS
March 12: Jacksonville, FL
March 15: Sarasota, FL
March 16: Lakeland, FL
March 17: Melbourne, FL
March 19: Columbus, GA
March 20: Asheville, NC
March 21: Greensboro, NC
March 22-23: Lexington, VA
March 25: New Brunswick, NJ
March 26: Greenvale, NY
March 27-28: Worcester, MA
April 1: Burlington, VT
April 2: Portland, ME
May 13-15: Charlotte, NC
June 4-6: Boston, MA
June 8-13: Hartford, CT