



**THE DALLAS OPERA
MEDIA RELEASE**

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**THE DALLAS OPERA'S
PORGY & BESS
PRODUCTION UNDERWRITER, TACA**

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**Performance Underwriters Kimberly-Clark Corporation,  
National Endowment for the Arts**

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**Benefiting the UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND
On Thursday, Feb. 28th**

DALLAS, FEBRUARY 12, 2008 — **The Dallas Opera** has announced its intention to donate a portion of the proceeds from each ticket sold to the **Thursday, February 28th performance of George Gershwin's** acclaimed American masterpiece, **PORGY & BESS**, to the **United Negro College Fund (UNCF)**.

A portion of the proceeds from each ticket sold will be donated to the highly regarded philanthropic organization based in Fairfax, Virginia. UNCF provides over 100 million dollars a year in college tuition monies for minority students, while at the same time providing financial support for scholarship funds at 39 historically black colleges and universities, both public and private.

Established in 1944 to address the inequities in educational resources for African American students, the United Negro College Fund administered scholarships are, today, open to all ethnicities.

From master film-maker **Spike Lee** to the legendary civil rights activist,

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., UNCF has had a decided impact on individual access to higher education.

Approximately 60 percent of the students receiving UNCF funded scholarships or grants are the first in their families to attend college. To date, more than 350,000 students have earned college or university degrees with the help of the United Negro College Fund and additional millions of dollars are allocated each year to assist students in pursuit of masters and doctoral degrees.

The benefit performance will be Thursday, February 28th at 7:30 pm in the Music Hall at Fair Park. Tickets may be purchased in advance by calling The Dallas Opera Ticket Services Office at 214-443-1000 or visiting us online at dallasopera.org.

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PORGY & BESS stars the remarkable soprano **Indira Mahajan** as Bess (the 2004 winner of the Maria Callas Debut Artist of the Year Award) and internationally renowned baritone **Gordon Hawkins** as Porgy, a role he first tackled in Australia at the age of 26!

PORGY & BESS, a co-production of The Dallas Opera, will be performed on **Friday, February 22nd** at 7:30 pm and **Sunday, February 24th** at 2:00 p.m. followed by performances on **Tuesday, February 26th; Thursday, February 28th and Saturday, March 1st** beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Dancers appear in cooperation with **Dallas Black Dance Theatre, Ann Williams, Artistic Director.**

Single tickets are on sale for **\$15 to \$235**, either online at [dallasopera.org](http://dallasopera.org) or by calling 214-443-1000.

The Dallas Opera is tremendously excited to present – at long last – the company debut of one of the world’s great keyboard artists and conductors, British-born **Wayne Marshall**, who will lead **The Dallas Opera Orchestra** in the Depression-Era work many believe to be America’s greatest contribution to opera.

Last staged by The Dallas Opera in 1995, **PORGY & BESS** (by George Gershwin, Dubose and Dorothy Heyward and Ira Gershwin) is an extraordinary collaborative effort that includes scenery and costumes created specifically for this production by half a dozen opera companies from Seattle to Houston.

The artistic collaboration is reflected onstage, as well, with a phenomenal African-American ensemble cast **staged by Broadway veteran Hope Clark** and headed by Mr. Hawkins (who recently earned a rave review from *New York Times* Classical Music Critic Anthony Tommasini for his “powerful singing” that “nearly stole the show all evening.”) and Ms. Mahajan (praised by Music Critic Tim Smith of *The Washington Post* for singing this role with “brilliance and ardor”).

The cast includes **Lester Lynch** as the menacing Crown and **Angela Renee Simpson** as Serena, both of whom sang these roles in Dallas in 1995; **Victor Ryan Robertson** in the coveted role of Sportin’ Life; **Janice Chandler-Eteme** as Clara; **Leon Williams** in the role of Jake and **Bonita Hyman** as Maria, all making their Dallas Opera debuts.

Other members of the ensemble: **Ivan Tolbert** as Mingo; **François Dewberry** as Robbins; **Donald Jones** as Jim; **Keron Jackson** as Frazier; **Angela Owens** as Annie; **Elias Hendricks** as Crab Man; **Sherna Armstrong** as Lily; **Kristian Roberts** as Strawberry Woman; **Fred Wilmer** as Peter; **Bobby L. Tinnion** as the Undertaker; **Charles Bogan** as Nelson; **John Victor Allen** as the Detective; **Keith Kubal** as the Policeman and **Bill Lengfelder** (The Dallas Opera’s Fight Choreographer) as the Coroner.

**Michael Heaston** sets a jaunty tone for the evening as pianist Jasbo Brown.

Set on “Catfish Row” (a fictitious section of Charleston, South Carolina), PORGY & BESS teems with unforgettable lyrics and melodies that entered the American popular music lexicon long, long ago; including “**Summertime**,” “**Bess, You Is My Woman Now**,” “**It Ain’t Necessarily So**,” and “**I Got Plenty o’ Nuttin’**.”

Composed in 1935, this self-proclaimed “folk opera” is comic, poignant and action-packed in its exploration of the lives of the working poor during one of the most difficult economic periods in American history.

The scenic design is by **Ken Foy** with costumes by the late **Judy Dearing**. Lighting is by Tony Award winner **Ken Billington**, wig and make-up design by **David Zimmerman**, and choreography by **stage director Hope Clark**.

The dancers from Dallas Black Dance Theatre are: **Katriccia Eaglin**; **Richard A. Freeman, Jr.**; **Allyne D. Gartell**; **Michael Jackson, Jr.**; **Alicia Pegues**; **Nycole Ray** and **Melissa M. Young**.

An all African American chorus, made up of regular members of **The Dallas Opera Chorus** as well as many new voices discovered in local auditions, is being prepared by **Chorus Master Alexander Rom**.

All five performances of PORGY & BESS are generously underwritten by **Production Underwriter TACA** and **Performance Underwriters Kimberly-Clark Corporation** and the **National Endowment for the Arts**.

**About UNCF**

*As the nation's oldest and most successful minority higher education assistance organization, the United Negro College Fund's mission is to provide financial support to its 39 member institutions and increase minority degree attainment by reducing financial barriers to college. UNCF institutions and other historically black colleges and universities are highly effective, awarding 18 percent of African American baccalaureate degrees. UNCF administers more than 400 programs, including scholarship, internship and fellowship programs, mentoring, summer enrichment, and curriculum and faculty development programs. Today, UNCF supports more than 65,000 students at over 900 colleges and universities across the country. Texas supports five UNCF schools: Huston-Tillotson University in Austin; Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins; Paul Quinn College in Dallas; Texas College in Tyler and Wiley College in Marshall. In 2007, UNCF awarded 8299 scholarships valued at \$74 million. Learn more about UNCF at [www.uncf.org](http://www.uncf.org).*

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Ticket Information for the 2007-2008 Dallas Opera Season
Presented by the Elsa von Seggern Foundation
Special Gratitude extended to Margot and the late Bill Winspear

Single tickets are priced at \$15 to \$235. For more information or to order your tickets, contact The Dallas Opera Ticket Services Office at 214-443-1000 or visit TDO's website at dallasopera.org.

The Dallas Opera is supported, in part, by funds from: **City of Dallas, Office of Cultural Affairs; TACA;** and the **Texas Commission on the Arts** and **American Express**. The Dallas Opera would like to thank its 2007-2008 production underwriters, including: **Kimberly-Clark Corporation, Nokia** and **Margot and the late Bill Winspear**. **American Airlines** is the official airline of The Dallas Opera. Pianos provided by **Steinway Hall, Dallas/Ft. Worth/Plano**. Advertising support from *The Dallas Morning News*.

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