

For Immediate Release

For information and photos contact:

Patrick Kowalczyk, patrick@pkpr.com (for arts>World Financial Center)  
PKPR, 212.627.8098

Jennifer Cho (for New York Opera Society)  
201.213.1473, admin@newyorkoperasociety.com

**What:** A Tribute to Black History Month: Fascinating Rhythms - Gershwin & Joplin;  
Co-presented by arts>World Financial Center and New York Opera Society  
**Where:** World Financial Center Winter Garden, 220 Vesey Street  
**When:** Friday, February 5, 2010  
12:30pm (running time: 45 minutes/highlights only) &  
7pm (running time: 75 minutes; full performance including projections of  
archival materials from National Gallery of Art)  
**Phone:** 212.945.0505  
**Web:** www.artsworldfinancialcenter.com and www.newyorkoperasociety.com  
**Cost:** Free – No tickets or reservations required

**ARTS>WORLD FINANCIAL CENTER AND NEW YORK OPERA SOCIETY**

**CO-PRESENT A TRIBUTE TO BLACK HISTORY MONTH:**

**FASCINATING RHYTHMS - GERSHWIN AND JOPLIN**

*Two free concerts to feature celebrated  
opera singers Christina Clark and Kenneth Overton*

New York, NY (December 21, 2009) – In celebration of Black History Month, arts>World Financial Center and New York Opera Society (NYOS) will co-present two free concerts showcasing the music of George Gershwin and Scott Joplin, featuring renowned soprano Christina Clark and baritone Kenneth Overton.

Marking the debut of NYOS at the Winter Garden, the concerts will take place on Friday, February 5<sup>th</sup> with an evening performance at 7:00pm (running time: 75 minutes) and a lunchtime performance featuring selected highlights at 12:30pm (running time: 45 minutes).

The concerts will also feature NYOS' 1930's Weimar Berlin style jazz quintet comprised of pianist Danielle DeSwert Hahn, violinist Elizabeth Young, double bassist Chris Castro, trombonist Alex Regazzi and clarinetist Stephen Zielinski.

Exploring the rich musical legacy of Gershwin and Joplin, the performances will include the Jascha Heifetz setting for *Porgy and Bess*, several seminal pieces by Gershwin, excerpts from Joplin's treasured opera, *Treemonisha*, and new settings by Jonah Blum of cherished melodies and rhythms by Joplin.

Accompanied by original projections developed by director Joachim Schamberger from archival materials from the National Gallery of Art, the musical program illustrates Joplin's influence on the young Gershwin, and their indelible marks on American music as the respective Kings of Ragtime and American Popular Song. The program examines the common musical genius of

Gershwin and Joplin: seamlessly integrating the techniques of European traditional music with the wildly popular music of their time.

This concert is presented with the cooperation of the music department of the National Gallery of Art, which will present the New York Opera Society on February 3, 2010 in a concert of music by George Gershwin in honor of From Impressionism to Modernism: The Chester Dale Collection.

Now in its 22<sup>nd</sup> season, arts>World Financial Center is the East Coast's largest presenter of free, year-round performing and visual arts. Other season highlights include a weeklong celebration of Chopin's 200th birthday and New York Classical Theatre's *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* to be performed throughout nearly 3.5 acres of the sprawling World Financial Center.

### **About the Artists**

*A wistful smile for Treemonisha... with the affective young soprano Christina Clark in the title role. Ms. Clark's voice is warm and true. She made a vulnerable Treemonisha"*  
Anthony Tommasini - THE NEW YORK TIMES

*"Christina Clark was affecting and stalwart in the title role"*  
Heidi Waleson - THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

American soprano **Christina Clark** received her education at the University of Michigan where she was a Graduate Fellow. She has participated in nationally acclaimed Tanglewood, Banff and Ravinia Song Festivals and is a recipient of many grants and awards, including that of the Metropolitan Opera Company.

Miss Clark performed with Florida Grand Opera as well as the opera companies of Toledo and Cleveland. For her role-portrait of Treemonisha in Scott Joplin's Treemonisha for the Opera Theatre St. Louis in the spring of 2000 she received praise from the New York Times, Chicago Tribune and other acclaimed music critics around the country.

In the 1996/97 season Christina made her German debut in Dusseldorf appearing as Clara in Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess" in a celebrated production of the New-York-Harlem-Opera and as Polly Peachum in Weill's "Three Penny Opera" for the Kurt-Weill-Festival in Dessau. Since 2001 she has been a soloist of the Aalto-Musiktheater in Essen. She performs such roles as Gretel in Hänsel and Gretel, Tullia in Ottone in villa by Antonio Vivaldi, Despina in *Così fan tutte*, Marzelline in *Fidelio*, Ännchen in *Der Freischütz*, Frasquita in *Carmen*, Najade in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Lois Lane/Bianca in *Kiss me Kate*, Nanetta in *Falstaff*, Dorinda in *Orlando* by Händel and Tytania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Highlights of recent seasons were her highly successful debuts at the Zurich Opernhaus (Dorinda in Händel's *Orlando* under the baton of William Christie) and at the Komische Oper Berlin (Hermione in Handel's *Orest* - musical director Thomas Hengelbrock). In the current season of the Aalto-Theater, she can be heard as Semele in *Semele* by G.F. Händel, Iduna in *Das Feuerwerk* by Paul Burkhard and Musetta in *La Bohème*.

Along with numerous operatic roles, Christina continues to perform concerts and recitals in the United States and Germany. Guest performances led her to the opera houses

Dusseldorf/Duisburg, Bonn, Wiesbaden, Giessen, Kassel and prestigious festivals such as Richard-Strauss-Tage, Mosel-Musik-Festival and Schloss Elmau.

She performs internationally and is received with great enthusiasm from critics and audiences alike in the United States, Canada, all throughout Europe, Russia and Israel.

*"Baritone Kenneth Overton provided a proud instrument and an outstanding ability to project text meaningfully; like Nancy Loesch, he's good-looking and a gifted actor. ...Overton rendered a thoroughly convincing portrait of a character ahead of his time."*

William V. Madison - Opera News online

**Baritone Kenneth Overton** has consistently received accolades for his rich, gleaming voice and his many layered, powerful interpretations. In 2009, Kenneth debuted with the San Francisco Opera and performed the complex role of Stephen Kumalo in *Lost in the Stars* with Skylark Opera. He also made his debut last spring with Stadttheater Klagenfurt (Austria) as Jake (Porgy and Bess). In the summer of 2007, Kenneth debuted as Marcello (*La Bohème*) with the Missouri Symphony Society and with American Opera Projects portraying the role of Afro-American Baseball Star Josh Gibson in (*The Summer King*). The 2007-2008 season held many debuts for Mr. Overton including symphonic engagements with the Riverside Symphonia (Holiday/Pops), and The Phoenix Symphony Orchestra (Messiah). Kenneth also made a role and company debut with Boheme Opera (New Jersey) as Germont (*La Traviata*) in his first venture into the Verdi Repertoire. This winter Kenneth will also resume touring with The American Spiritual Ensemble and will begin recording his debut CD of Negro Spirituals. Mr. Overton made his hometown debut (Philadelphia) with Center City Opera as Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*). He recently toured the British Isles as Porgy in Living Arts' *Porgy and Bess* and, in the same role, opened Opera Memphis' 51st season. He recently sang his first Escamillo (*Carmen*) with the Missouri Symphony Society, as well as Leporello (*Don Giovanni*) with Opera Memphis, Ping (*Turandot*) with Sacramento Opera, Bello (*La Fanciulla del West*) with Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, performed as Bass soloist in Beethoven's 9th Symphony with the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra, and as the Baritone soloist in Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs* with the Oratorio Society of New Jersey. Kenneth is a co-founder of Opera Noire of New York, a performing arts organization created to empower African-American artists to reach their full creative potential in a mutually supportive environment.

**The New York Opera Society (NYOS)** benefits artists and audiences alike through high quality, performance-driven, just-in-time productions here and abroad, offering fresh and sometimes provocative interpretations of contemporary and classical works.

In its most recent season, NYOS featured a new production of *Falstaff* for its annual festival in southern France under the baton of Emmanuel Plasson and l'Ensemble Instrumental du Pays de Cogan; the U.S. premiere of a contemporary Spanish opera by Guggenheim Fellow and Juilliard faculty Ricardo Llorca, *Las Horas Vacías*, at the United Nations; an acclaimed evening of Italian *Bel Canto* with guest conductor Maestro Carlo Rizzari at the Embassy of Italy; and a widely celebrated concert tour for young Norwegian singers which was aired on Chicago's Classical Radio WFMT and shown at the St. Andrew's Music Society, Chicago Cultural Center and the National Gallery of Art.

NYOS annually tours a new production of an extant work in international festivals abroad; features a contemporary opera or new commission in the United States; hosts a Salon Series and an International Artist in Residence Program; supports outreach in underserved communities; and

runs a training program called Les Jeunes Solistes. The NYOS' artistic endeavors regularly involve local practitioners, organizations and musicians. The Society is led by its Executive Director Jennifer Cho, who has received numerous awards for her work in music since completing her studies as a dual alumna from Northwestern University, and by a dedicated Board of Directors chaired by its accomplished president A.T. Nguyen.

### **About arts>World Financial Center**

arts>World Financial Center <[www.artsworldfinancialcenter.com](http://www.artsworldfinancialcenter.com)> is the leading showcase in Lower Manhattan for visual and performing arts, presenting the work of emerging and established artists. The artistic process is made accessible in a year-round, free, open and interactive manner to workers, residents and the broader public of cultural consumers. Since 1988, arts>World Financial Center has presented interdisciplinary arts programming with an emphasis on commissioned works, site-specific installations and premieres.