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**TOO HOT TO HANDEL: THE JAZZ-GOSPEL MESSIAH RETURNS TO THE  
AUDITORIUM THEATRE OF ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY  
DECEMBER 12 AND 14, 2008**

Tenors Rodrick Dixon and Victor Trent Cook and Soprano Alfreda Burke Incorporate  
Jazz, Gospel and Bebop into a Soulful Reinvention of Handel's Beloved Oratorio  
for a Rousing Performance to Kick Off the Holiday Season

CHICAGO— Brett Batterson, executive director of the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University (ATRU), is pleased to announce the return of *Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz-Gospel Messiah* to Chicago's National Historic Landmark Auditorium Theatre. For two performances only, Friday, December 12 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, December 14 at 3 p.m., the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, 50 East Congress Parkway, will be filled with the sounds of this soulful reinvention of Handel's *Messiah*. This joyful musical experience is quickly becoming one of Chicago's favorite annual events. Tickets are now on sale.

*Too Hot to Handel* has continued to garner critical and popular acclaim since its 2006 Chicago debut. "A prediction: *Too Hot to Handel* will be playing annually at the Auditorium Theatre for as long as that edifice is standing...[the production] is well on its way toward becoming a civic tradition," says Howard Reich of the *Chicago Tribune*.

"Ingeniously reimagined to embrace black musical tradition, the aptly named *Too Hot to Handel* proved that even the most revered classical masterpieces can be taught to swing," Reich raved in a 2007 review of the production.

*Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz Gospel Messiah* shapes George Frederic Handel's beloved *Messiah* masterpiece into an active listening experience. With almost 200 performers on stage, this soulful jazz-gospel interpretation features two members of the dynamic tenor trio Cook, Dixon & Young: **Rodrick Dixon** and **Victor Trent Cook**; plus soprano **Alfreda Burke** and 150 voices of the city-wide Too Hot Choir (under the direction of Old St. Pat's **Bill Fraher**); a 50-piece symphony orchestra and a jazz ensemble conducted by **Suzanne Mallare Acton**.

In addition to appearing with Rodrick Dixon and Thomas Young in their 2005 PBS "Great Performances" Special "Cook, Dixon & Young in Concert: Volume One," Victor Trent Cook has starred on Broadway in "St. Louis Woman" opposite Vanessa Williams and received a Tony Award nomination for his performance in "Smokey Joe's Café." More recently, Cook was seen touring with "Cinderella" starring Eartha Kitt. Cook has appeared as a soloist at The White House, John F. Kennedy Center, Avery Fisher Hall and Boston Symphony Hall.

Rodrick Dixon has performed several roles with the Lyric Opera of Chicago and appeared in Broadway's "Ragtime," as well as the revival of "Show Boat" at the Auditorium Theatre. In 2009 Dixon will make his Los Angeles Philharmonic debut performing the role of Oedipus in Stravinsky's "Oedipus Rex," conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen and directed by Peter Sellars.

Dixon also has toured nationally with his wife, soprano Alfreda Burke. Burke's credits include debuts with the Chicago Symphony at Ravinia under Erich Kunzel, the CSO's Symphony Center Inaugural Festival, Chicago Opera Theater, Grant Park Music Festival, and "Show Boat" at the Kennedy Center and the Auditorium Theatre. Burke is on the voice faculty of Wheaton College Conservatory and Chicago State University.

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### **PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE**

*Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz Gospel Messiah* will be presented Friday, Dec. 12 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 14 at 3 p.m.

### **TICKET INFORMATION**

*Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz Gospel Messiah* tickets are now on sale, and single ticket prices are \$30 / \$40 / \$50 / \$65. For tickets, visit the Auditorium Theatre box office at 50 E. Congress Parkway, call (312) 902-1500 or log on to ticketmaster.com.

Discounted *Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz Gospel Messiah* tickets are currently available for groups of 10 or more. For more information, call (312) 431-2357 or e-mail [bbullock@auditoriumtheatre.org](mailto:bbullock@auditoriumtheatre.org).

*Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz Gospel Messiah* tickets are currently available as part of two Auditorium Theatre 2008-2009 subscription series. The American Series includes tickets to *Margaret Garner*, *Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz-Gospel Messiah* and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. The Arts Appreciation Series includes tickets to The Kirov Ballet & Orchestra, *Margaret Garner*, *Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz-Gospel Messiah*, Batsheva Dance Company, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Nederlands Dans Theater I. Subscribers receive a 10% discount on tickets, priority seating, invitations to special events, prepaid discounted parking and other benefits. For more information, call (312) 431-2357 or e-mail [bbullock@auditoriumtheatre.org](mailto:bbullock@auditoriumtheatre.org).

The two performances of *Too Hot to Handel* are supported by the generosity of "Friends of *Too Hot to Handel*."

### **FAMILY MATINEE SERIES**

The Family Matinee Series is designed specifically to awaken children's interest in live performance and plant the seed for developing an appreciation of the arts. This unique opportunity allows patrons to receive a free children's subscription with the purchase of a full-price adult subscription. This year's Family Matinee Series will introduce children to an eclectic mix of dance and music offerings, including classical ballet with the Kirov Ballet and Orchestra's *Giselle* (Oct. 4), the Auditorium Theatre's annual *Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz-Gospel Messiah* (Dec. 14), and innovative modern dance with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (April 4). Each family matinee performance is followed by a question and answer session with members of the shows' artistic teams. This interactive experience can dramatically change the impact of the performing arts on its viewers, and with the involvement of families it can also empower youth to express themselves.

### **ABOUT THE AUDITORIUM THEATRE OF ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY**

The Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, located at 50 E. Congress Parkway, is an independent, not-for-profit organization committed to presenting the finest in international, cultural and community programming to Chicago, and to the continued restoration and preservation of the National Historic Landmark Auditorium Theatre. For more information about programming, volunteer and donor opportunities or theater tours, call (312) 922-2110 or visit [auditoriumtheatre.org](http://auditoriumtheatre.org), now featuring *Chicago's Landmark Stage*, a comprehensive online history of the Auditorium from 1889 through today, made possible by the generous support of the American Express Performing Arts Fund.

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