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*AIH & the Chicago Park District South Region host a Sizzling Summer Concert Series
A Spring Sampler fundraiser on May 1st*

CHICAGO...In its 16th year, **Africa International House (AIH)**, in collaboration with the **Chicago Park District South Region**, will host *Concerts in the Park* summer concert series highlighting some of Chicago's **hottest** musical talent in the genres of jazz, Latin, reggae, and R&B, including the **Soundmine Merchants Big Band** and the multiple, award-winning mambo orchestra, **Latin Street**.

Kicking off the series will be *A Spring Sampler*, a fundraiser featuring some of the city's finest talent performing in the concert series: Emmy-award winning jazz/R&B vocalist **Joan Collaso**; percussion phenom **Taylor Moore**; mesmerizing instrumentalist **Sax Preacher**; and reggae artist **Carl Brown** aka *Mr. Solid Gold*, on **Friday, May 1st** at **Harriett Harris Park**, 6200 S. Drexel Blvd., from **6-8pm**. **Donation is \$20**. Proceeds from *A Spring Sampler* support the *Concerts in the Park* series and AIH's cultural programming.

Attendees will receive **free samples** of African and Caribbean cuisine and there will be a **Mother's Day Marketplace** for shoppers to purchase exquisite gifts for mom! (*Reminder: Mother's Day is Sunday, May 10th*).

Utilizing the universal language known as music, the concert series is an enriching experience built on the city's reputation of being one of the most diverse, metropolitan and creative spaces in the nation.

All concerts in the *Concerts in the Park* series are **FREE** and open to the public. For additional information, visit AIH's website: www.aihusa.org or contact Keisha Chavers, 773.218.1844 (c); themultilevelgroup@gmail.com. Performers' bios follow this release.

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About African International House

The mission of Africa International House (AIH) is to serve as a center that exposes and educates all peoples to the individual works and collective contributions of African cultures. Our mission is addressed through our flagship program, the African Festival of the Arts, and through other activities that promote African-based culture.

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About the Performers

Sax Preacher, musical artist, record label, publisher

Sax Preacher was born and raised in Chicago, IL. He began playing the sax at Englewood High School in 1972. After graduating from high school in 1976, Sax Preacher went on to pursue a career in music. He continued his music studies at Olive-Harvey College where he met and took private lessons with jazz great Jimmy Ellis. He also studied music at Kennedy-King College (Doug Turner) & Loop College (James Mack). Later, he attended Columbia College and majored in Arts, Entertainment & Media Management with a minor in Theatre. After leaving college and starting a few production companies with other people, he teamed up with Lincoln University music major Tyrone Williams (Omari Jahi Aton), recorded and produced three CDs & two live DVDs on TOMA Records and have sold to this date over 10,000 copies through their own distribution channel.

“In 1987 after taking my will to its extreme, I was diagnosed with a rare incurable lung disorder called Sarcoidosis. The doctor said that because of the scar tissue on my lungs; I would never play the saxophone again. The Creator proved the doctors wrong, they said I had only 18 months to live, but when GOD calls you on a mission, you might run for a while, but you can't hide. I stopped running, repented of my transgressions, and GOD through the use of nature's herbs, prayer, and a change in diet, healed me.”

By 1990— nine years after the original conception of T.O.M.A.—the Temple of Mercy Association was born. Sax Preacher and Omari (keyboards) have been performing songs from their CDs at gigs throughout the Chicago and suburban areas. Mostly performing as a duet and sometimes with the back-up band, Energy, Time & Space, the current members of E.T.S. are Earl O'Neal (guitar), James Thornton (bass), David Ivory (bass), and Glover Washington, Jr. (drums). ETS has been with TOMA Production since 1987. Sax Preacher and Omari have shared the stage with R. Kelly & MGM, Lou Rawls, Art Porter, Roy Hytower (Doctu), Tyrone Davis, Buddy Ace, Koco Taylor, Otis Clay, Bernie Mac, Adele Givens, and many, many more.

Joan Collaso

Emmy- award winner and international vocalist, Joan Collaso, was born, raised and is living in Chicago. Joan's flowing sensual melodies, colorful improvisations and soulful stylings capture your ear; her spirit will capture your heart. She blends the textures of jazz, R&B, blues and gospel in a way that gives her a distinct sound.

In 1997, Joan appeared singing in the history-making movie, *Soul Food*. Four times, to standing-room-only crowds, she has enlightened audiences at the North Sea Jazz Festival in the Netherlands. Joan's other festival appearances include the JazzKaar Festival in Estonia (Russia); the Sister Cities Festival in Osaka, Japan; and touring northern Italy for the Central Jazz Torino School of Jazz. She has appeared at least 10 times at the Elkhart Jazz Festival and most recently gave her debut performance at the Chicago Jazz Festival where she was named one of the Top 5 “must-see” performances.

In 2011, Collaso opened for the R&B artist, India Arie, at the African Festival of the Arts in Chicago. She has been featured on countless radio and TV commercials, and was a featured vocalist on world-renowned pianist, Ramsey Lewis' *Urban Renewal* CD. Three times in 2009, she performed on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* as background vocalist for Susan Boyle, Alicia Keys, Jennifer Hudson, Sugarland, and Tim McGraw.

Collaso weaves her extraordinary skills in her community. As an advocate for social justice, Joan has written, produced and performed musical plays that teach history and promote education, courage and love for school-age children and families. In 2010, Collaso started a new organization, *Timeless Gifts*, a mentoring and performance program for youth in the arts (ages 8-18). Joan and some of her most accomplished colleagues are currently mentoring 25 young performers. Her ultimate vision for this organization is the *Timeless Gifts Center for the Arts*.

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Taylor Moore

Taylor Moore is a drummer, percussionist and producer from the South Side of Chicago. When asked how long she has been playing the drums, she is quick to answer, "Since I was in utero." Even before she was born, Taylor would "beat" to the rhythm inside of her mother when there was music in the air. As a toddler, she had a favorite pot that she would "play."

While in kindergarten, she entered an Afro-centric after school program that offered the rhythms that had always been a part of her. As the only female in the African drum corps, Mandinjalina, Taylor played the djembe with such passion and skill, she was always a standout during group performances.

Over the years, Taylor honed her skills playing classical music pieces as a member of the Kenwood Academy H. S. Concert and Marching bands. During her sophomore year, she received a scholarship to attend the National High School Music Institute at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL. Her classical music training also included playing with the Protégé Philharmonic and the All-City Concert Band in Chicago. A lover of all kinds of music, this talented young lady branched out into jazz in her sophomore year of high school, playing with the Kenwood Jazz Band and the Jazz Links Ensemble.

This percussion phenom recently made her debut at The Jazz Showcase in Chicago, a premier venue which has featured such jazz luminaries as Art Blakey, James Moody and Charlie Parker, among many. Taylor was one of the youngest headliners ever at the club.

Taylor has played with a multitude of great musicians, like percussion phenom Shelia E., singer Patrice Rushen, world-class drummer Ndugu Chancler, jazz pianists Willie Pickens, Ken Chaney and Robert "Baabe" Irving III, gospel greats Andrae Crouch and Sandra Crouch, jazz singers Kurt Elling and Maggie Brown, legendary jazz organist Rueben Wilson, and blues guitarist Clarence Spadey. She has also been mentored by music legends, such as world-renowned percussionist/drummer, Steve Berrios and Grammy award-winning vocalist, Cassandra Wilson, just to name a few.

A college graduate, Taylor received her Bachelor's in Music Performance (Jazz Drumset) and Production from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in May 2011.

The rhythm that attracted Taylor Moore even while she was in the womb has become an integral part of her life. Her drumming has been called "crisp, passion-filled, expressive and all-consuming."

The Soundmine Merchants Big Band

Roland Brown, along with such notables as Tom Washington and John Whitfield, formed The Merchants Band in 1960. Washington is an arranger and recipient of multiple gold records and Grammy awards and bassist extraordinaire Whitfield, along with many other talented musicians through the years, has also contributed to the band's rich legacy.

Noteworthy are the contributions of composer/arranger and former band member John Meggs and Joint Venture is the result of an ongoing collaboration between Roland Brown and Jess Williams, band member and founder of Soundmine Studios and Open Mind Records.

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Carl Brown

Truly, Mr. Solid Gold, Carl Brown is a performer that has been fascinating audiences for some time. His signature style and presentation cannot be mistaken. This sweet-voiced vocalist has had great success singing with his band, Solid Gold International, since 1988.

Carl Brown's showmanship and vocals are unmatched, a gift that has earned him a record 17 consecutive years as Best Male Vocalist at the Chicago Reggae Music Awards."

Latin Street 911

911 Mambo Orchestra plays an array of Latin music from the modern tropical sounds of today to the most traditional, hard-hitting Mambo of the 50's. The bands play original arrangements by Angel Melendez and the music of Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri, Tito Rodriguez, Perez Prado and FANIA.

Melendez has featured his bands at some of the following prestigious events: U.S. Conference of Mayors Chicago 2005; 27th Annual Chicago Jazz Festival; Millennium Park Jazz Series featuring Danilo Perez; Louisville Fest 2007; African Festival of The Arts 2007; 17th Annual Viva!; Chicago Latin Music Festival; the Taste of Chicago; Chicago SummerDance; Old Town Folk & Roots Festival 2006; Bash on Wabash 2007; Puerto Rican Festival 2007; Chicago International Salsa Congress in 2002 & 2004; Chicago Salsa Festival 2007; Chicago's Millennium Park Opening Ceremonies 2004; Goose Island International Outdoor Fest; AARP Latino Community Celebration 2004; Closing for MALO; MLB All-Star Pepsi Park 2003; and *Chicago Tribune's Rock the River Fest*.

His bands have played at the most recognized Chicago venues like: The Chicago Symphony Center; Millennium Park's Pritzker Pavilion; Grant Park's Petrillo Music Shell; Harris Theatre for Music & Dance; the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art; Chicago Museum of Science and Industry; the House of Blues; the Park West; and Chicago's Field Museum among many others.

Angel Melendez has been a musical director and arranger for some of the world's most renowned Salsa artists, including Danilo Perez, Jimmy Bosch, Andy Montañez, Ismael Miranda, Luigi Texidor, Adalberto Santiago, Cheo Feliciano, the Singers of the Apollo Sound (Tito Cruz, Sammy Gonzalez & Papo Sanchez), Frankie Ruiz, Eddie Santiago, Lalo Rodriguez, Luisito Carrión, Hector Tricoche, Tito Allen & Johnny Rivera among others.

Additional honors include: 47th Annual Grammy Awards 2005 Best album Latin Traditional Tropical Category nominee; 4th Annual Independent Music Awards 2005 Best Latin Album (winner); featured song, "Mambo a La Sandoval" in *Dancing with the Stars*. April 2008 season; and *Chicago Magazine's* Chicagoan of the Year 2005, "Salsa King."

Proclaimed by former Mayor Richard Daley & 35th Ward Alderman Ray Colon & the 17th Annual Viva! Chicago Latin Music Festival, August 27th is designated as "Angel Melendez & the 911 Mambo Orchestra Day" in Chicago.