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THE AUDITORIUM THEATRE CELEBRATES THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF BILLY STRAYHORN WITH THE BILLY STRAYHORN FESTIVAL, SEPTEMBER 4 – NOVEMBER 21, A THREE-MONTH CELEBRATION OF THE LEGENDARY MUSICIAN

Performances and Special Events With Various Partners and Locations Throughout Chicagoland are Part of this New Festival Culminating with a Performance of Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn on the Auditorium’s Landmark Stage

CHICAGO — The Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University announces the programming for The Billy Strayhorn Festival, September 4 – November 21, celebrating the 100th birthday of the late Billy Strayhorn. The Festival begins with the Chicago Jazz Festival, Friday, Sept. 4 in Millennium Park, continues at various jazz clubs and locations throughout Chicago and culminates on the Auditorium Theatre’s landmark stage Saturday, Nov. 21 with Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn. For ticket information on all events, including Lush Life, go to AuditoriumTheatre.org/strayhorn.

“The Auditorium Theatre is proud to curate and present a Festival in honor of what would have been Billy Strayhorn’s 100th birthday. Strayhorn is a major force in the American Jazz canon. Due to the times in which he lived, and his openly gay lifestyle, he did not always receive the recognition he so rightly deserves. This Festival shines the spotlight directly on his work, his life and his numerous achievements. We look forward to wishing Billy Strayhorn a ‘Happy Birthday’ with all of Chicago,” said Auditorium Theatre Executive Director Brett Batterson.

The Lead Foundation Supporter for The Billy Strayhorn Festival is THE CHICAGO COMMUNITY TRUST with additional support provided by THE JOYCE FOUNDATION.

Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn
Saturday, Nov. 21 at 8 p.m.
Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Congress Pkwy.
Tickets: $29 - $68 Individual tickets to Lush Life go on sale Friday, Aug. 7 at 10 a.m. AuditoriumTheatre.org or 312.341.2300

The three-month centennial celebration of Billy Strayhorn concludes at the Auditorium Theatre with Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn. Under the musical direction of Bruce Mayhall Rastrelli, this fully staged salute to Strayhorn features Broadway star Darius de Haas and local favorite Joan Curto with Alan Broadbent on piano, the Auditorium’s “Too Hot to Handel” Orchestra, the Joel Hall Dancers and a 30-voice-all-male choir arranged by conductor Bill Chin.

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In addition to the music, the Auditorium Theatre will also be naming the inaugural recipient of its “Eighth Wonder Award” during the evening. The “Eighth Wonder Award” is so named because the Auditorium Theatre was proclaimed to be “The Eighth Wonder of the World” when it opened in 1889. The award will be presented annually to a notable individual in the fields of music, theatre, dance or architecture.

Gala Benefit Celebrating The Billy Strayhorn Festival
Saturday, Nov. 21 at 5 p.m.
Tickets: Gala tickets are $500 and tables start at $5,000
For further information, contact Amanda Byrne at 312.341.2364 or abyrne@auditoriumtheatre.org.

Programming for The Billy Strayhorn Festival includes:

Jazz Institute of Chicago’s Jazz Club Crawl
Pre-Festival Event
Wednesday, Sept. 2 from 6 p.m. – Midnight
Starts at Reggie’s Chicago, 2109 S. State St.
Tickets are $30 at ReggiesLive.com.
The Jazz Institute of Chicago leads a tour of Chicago’s jazz clubs with this club crawl, allowing participants to enjoy the great variety of clubs that call Chicago home. Billy Strayhorn’s image is featured on the badge that allows access to the clubs.

Chicago Jazz Orchestra at the Chicago Jazz Festival
Friday, Sept. 4 at 8:30 p.m.
Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park, 201 E. Randolph Street
Tickets: FREE
The City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and Jazz Institute of Chicago join the Auditorium Theatre to throw a FREE 100th birthday for Strayhorn in the heart of Chicago at Millennium Park. The Chicago Jazz Orchestra performs many of Strayhorn’s classic works.

Andy’s Jazz Club featuring the Mike Smith Quartet with Jordan Baskin on Piano
Wednesday, Sept. 23 at 9:30 p.m., 11 p.m. and midnight
Andy’s Jazz Club, 11 E. Hubbard St.
Tickets: $10
The longest-running “steady” (aka as a regular jazz engagement at the same club) in Chicago belongs to the alto saxist Mike Smith celebrating his 33rd anniversary at Andy’s Jazz Club. Join the Mike Smith Quartet, and pianist Jordan Baskin for an evening of Strayhorn at this regular gig.

Fundraiser and Performance for Strayhorn’s Plaque on North Halsted’s Legacy Project
Saturday, Oct. 3 at 6 p.m.
Private Event
An evening of live performance, original recordings and speakers to raise funds to include Strayhorn as part of North Halsted’s Legacy Project, an outdoor public display that celebrates LGBTQ history and people. Hosted by E. Patrick Johnson, Department of Performance Studies and African American Studies at Northwestern University, with Kim Hunt, Johari Jabir and Cedric Brown.

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The Life and Music of Billy Strayhorn
Sunday, Oct. 4 at 4 p.m.
Tickets: FREE
Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.
A tribute to Billy Strayhorn’s life and music with live music, original recordings and a chronicle of his career and personal history. Hosted by E. Patrick Johnson, Department of Performance Studies and African American Studies at Northwestern University, with Kim Hunt, Johari Jabir and Cedric Brown.

Jazz’n on the Southside featuring Dee Alexander
Wednesday, Oct. 7 at 7 p.m.
Caribbean Cove, 8020 S. King Dr.
Charles Heath’s Wednesday night series Jazz’n on the South Side dedicates this evening to the music of Strayhorn with singer Dee Alexander whom the Chicago Tribune says is “the definition of great jazz singing.”

Performance at T & JJ’s with D’Erania
Friday, Oct. 30, time TBD
T & JJ’s Banquet Hall, 718 S. 5th Ave., Maywood
Larry Shapiro, Maywood’s senior services coordinator and an avid Jazz enthusiast, curates a night of music at the Maywood location known for its soul food and music. Featuring musician D’Erania, who ChicagoJazz.com calls “delightful” and “a distinctive voice.”

Jazz Showcase
Tuesday, Nov. 3, time TBD
Jazz Showcase, 806 S. Plymouth Ct.
Joe Siegel and Wayne Siegel host a night of Strayhorn at their venue that has been presenting Jazz since 1947. Artist TBD.

Miguel de la Cerna and Friends
Chicago pianist Miguel de la Cerna hosts and leads the line up of the hottest performers in a salute to Strayhorn’s legacy. Date, time and location TBD.

N’Digo Night of Music
N’Digo’s publisher Hermene Hartman creates a night of Strayhorn music. Date, time and location TBD.

Chicago Human Rhythm Project
Jazz Showcase, 806 S. Plymouth Ct.
Lane Alexander and Chicago Human Rhythm Project mix Strayhorn’s music with dance in this special production at Jazz Showcase. Date and time TBD.

WDCB College of DuPage
Throughout November
For the duration of his entire 100th birthday month, WDCB, the radio station of the College of DuPage, schedules Strayhorn music and hosts programs on the legendary man, his career and his influence on music and society.

Educational Panel Discussions on the State of Gay Black America
In addition, the Auditorium Theatre presents three different panels to discuss the state of Gay Black America today and in relation to Strayhorn’s experiences. Dates, times, and other locations TBD.

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* More programming to be added. Performances, dates, venues and content may change.

**About Billy Strayhorn**

As a youth in Hillsborough, North Carolina, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Billy Strayhorn received extensive training in music. In December 1938, at the age of 23 years old, he submitted a composition to Duke Ellington, who was so impressed by the young man's talent that three months later he recorded Strayhorn's *Something to Live For* with the composer as the pianist. Strayhorn worked with Ellington for a perfect complement to Ellington's, that it is now impossible to establish the exact extent of the former's contribution to Ellington's oeuvre.

Strayhorn collaborated on more than 200 items in Ellington's repertory, including such standards as *Take the "A" Train* and *Satin Doll*. His ballads, including *Lush Life*, *Something to Live For*, *Day Dream*, *After All*, *Passion Flower*, *Chelsea Bridge*, *Lotus Blossom*, and *Blood Count*, are harmonically and structurally among the most sophisticated in jazz.

Although Strayhorn and Ellington collaborated on numerous pieces, Strayhorn remained fairly anonymous and was rarely credited or compensated for his work.

Strayhorn was openly gay and actively involved in the civil rights movement. For the musical revue *My People* he arranged *King Fought the Battle of 'Bam*, dedicated to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. At 53 years old, Strayhorn died from cancer. Although relatively unknown during his career, his complex arrangements and classical elements have inspired generations of jazz musicians.

**About the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University**

The Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, located at 50 E. Congress Pkwy, is an Illinois, not-for-profit organization committed to presenting the finest in international, cultural, community and educational programming to Chicago, and to the continued restoration and preservation of the National Historic Landmark Auditorium Theatre. In September of 2014, the Auditorium Theatre was awarded the inaugural Fifth Star Award by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. On December 9, 2014, the Auditorium Theatre celebrated its 125th Birthday with a proclamation from the City of Chicago declaring it “Auditorium Theatre Day.” For the first time in over 50 years, the NFL Draft returned to Chicago, which took place at the Auditorium Theatre April 30 and May 1.

The Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University announces the programming for *The Billy Strayhorn Festival, September 2 – November 21*, celebrating the 100th birthday of Billy Strayhorn. The Festival begins with the Chicago Jazz Festival, Friday, Sept. 4 in Millennium Park, continues at various jazz clubs and locations throughout Chicago in September and October and culminates at the Auditorium Theatre Saturday, Nov. 21 with *Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn*, a gala performance with live music and the presentation of the “Eighth Wonder Award.”

For ticket information on all events, including *Lush Life*, go to AuditoriumTheatre.org/strayhorn.

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The Auditorium Theatre is generously supported by the MacArthur Foundation, the Illinois Arts Council, the Sage Foundation, and the Palmer House Hilton. For more information about programming, volunteer and donor opportunities or theatre tours, call (312) 341-2310 or visit AuditoriumTheatre.org.