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THE AUDITORIUM THEATRE CONCLUDES THE
BILLY STRAYHORN FESTIVAL, A THREE MONTH CITY WIDE MUSIC FESTIVAL,
WITH LUSH LIFE: THE MUSIC OF BILLY STRAYHORN, NOVEMBER 21

Lush Life is a Fully Staged Salute to Strayhorn, Under the Musical Direction of Bruce Mayhall Rastrelli and Features Broadway Star Darius De Haas, as well as Joan Curto and Alan Broadbent, the Auditorium’s Too Hot To Handel Orchestra, Joel Hall Dancers and a 30-Voice-All-Male Choir

CHICAGO — The Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University presents Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn Saturday, Nov. 21 at 8 p.m. The event is the culmination of The Billy Strayhorn Festival, a three month long city wide music festival celebrating the 100th birthday of the late Billy Strayhorn. The Festival began with the Chicago Jazz Festival, Friday, Sept. 4 in Millennium Park, continues with performances and educational panels at various jazz clubs and other locations throughout Chicago before its final performance and gala celebration on the Auditorium Theatre’s landmark stage with Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn. Tickets for Lush Life start at $29 and are currently on sale online at AuditoriumTheatre.org, by phone at (312) 341-2300 or in-person at the Auditorium Theatre Box Office (50 E. Congress Parkway). Subscriptions for the Auditorium Theatre’s 2015-16 season and discounted tickets for groups of 10 or more are also on sale. For more information visit AuditoriumTheatre.org.

That same evening, the Auditorium Theatre hosts their annual Gala benefiting the Auditorium Theatre. The Gala features cocktails and dinner in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Chicago, 720 S. Michigan Ave, followed by the performance of Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn. The Gala begins with cocktails at 5 p.m. and features dinner entertainment by Orbert Davis and The Rich Daniels Quintet playing a Billy Strayhorn program. After dinner, guests will continue on to the Auditorium Theatre in VIP seating for the performance beginning at 8 p.m. Gala tickets begin at $500 and tables start at $5000. For further information, contact Amanda Byrne at (312) 341-2364 or abyrne@auditoriumtheatre.org. Honorary Chairs for The Billy Strayhorn Festival are Alyce and Rochelle Claerbaut. Event chairs include Bruce Bachmann, Sidney and Sondra Berman Epstein, Dave Samber and Darrell Windle.

“We’ve been amazed at how the city of Chicago has embraced the life and music of this iconic jazz legend through our Billy Strayhorn Festival,” said Executive Director Brett Batterson. “We started with the very first concert at the Chicago Jazz Festival and it’s been so rewarding experiencing the music of Strayhorn at some of the most lively and eclectic jazz halls in this great city. This ground-breaking final celebration on the Auditorium Theatre stage is a performance we’ll be talking about for years to come.”
Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn is under the musical direction of Bruce Mayhall Rastrelli and is a fully staged salute to Strayhorn featuring Broadway star Darius de Haas and local cabaret icon Joan Curto with Alan Broadbent on piano, the Auditorium’s Too Hot to Handel Orchestra, Joel Hall Dancers and a 30-voice-all-male choir arranged by conductor Bill Chin.

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

The Billy Strayhorn Festival Gala Celebration is sponsored by the PASQUINELLI FAMILY FOUNDATION.

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 the next 25 years as a composer, arranger and pianist. The two men were so attuned to one another musically, and Strayhorn's work was such 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 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. 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.”

The 2015 – 2016 Auditorium Theatre Season includes The Billy Strayhorn Festival, through – November 21; Twyla Tharp – 50th Anniversary Tour, November 5 – 8; Chicago Jazz Philharmonic – Scenes from Life: Cuba!, November 13; Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn Gala and Performance, November 21; Thodos Dance Chicago, January 9; Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz-Gospel Messiah, January 16 – 17; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, March 8 – 13; Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal – Leonce and Lena, April 1 – 3; and Giordano Dance Chicago, June 11. For a complete listing of events at the Auditorium Theatre, please click here.

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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.

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