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MILLENNIUM PARK'S BLOCKBUSTER WEEK RETURNS!

New for 2007: Free Performance by The Joffrey Ballet

Plus, Free Performances by Steppenwolf Theater Company,
Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

September 5 – 9, 2007

From September 5 - 9, 2007 the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park will be home to the third annual **Blockbuster Week**, featuring free concerts and performances by Chicago's most renowned performing arts institutions. For the first time in 2007, **The Joffrey Ballet** will present a free performance, in addition to **Steppenwolf Theatre Company**, **Lyric Opera of Chicago** and the **Chicago Symphony Orchestra**.

"There is no other venue in the world that consistently offers the kind of great free public programs that Chicagoans can find in Millennium Park throughout the summer. This is never more evident than during 'Blockbuster Week,' when park visitors can experience four free performances by our city's most treasured cultural gems – The Joffrey Ballet, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Steppenwolf Theatre Company and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra," said Millennium Park Executive Director Helen Doria.

The week will begin on Wednesday, September 5 at 6:30pm when **The Joffrey Ballet** returns to Millennium Park after presenting a series of free standing-room-only performances at the Harris Theater for Music & Dance and the Jay Pritzker Pavilion last summer. The Joffrey will perform their popular program **Cool Vibrations**, featuring three exciting dance works set to contemporary music:

- *Deuce Coupe* (1973), a program which revolutionized the way the world viewed ballet, featuring choreography by Twyla Tharp performed to the all-American music of The Beach Boys;
- *Motown Suite* (2006), Donald Byrd's first work created for The Joffrey Ballet set to Motown's greatest hits such as "Dancing in the Street," "You Can't Hurry Love," and "I Heard it Through (the Grapevine)";
- and *Sometimes it Snows in April*, a crowd favorite that combines choreographer Laura Dean's signature geometric patterns and mesmerizing repetition with the music of Prince.

"Last year's *Come Dance with Us* program of free events in Millennium Park was the highlight of our 50th Anniversary Celebration," said Jon H. Teeuwissen, Executive Director of The Joffrey Ballet. "The massive response to our programming was thrilling, and so it is with great pleasure

that we return to the Pritzker stage to offer Chicago another free performance of our runaway hit ***Cool Vibrations.***"

Blockbuster Week will continue on Thursday, September 6 at 6:30pm with **Steppenwolf Theatre Company's Traffic Series** presenting *I Sing America*. The program will pair Steppenwolf Artistic Director Martha Lavey and other ensemble members with Chicago Children's Choir in poetry and song during this celebration of American citizenship and the loving and fiery conversation our country has with its artists.

"We are fortunate to return to Millennium Park. This public space, democratic in its accessibility and use, animated by the work of artists is a perfect setting for 'I Sing America.' Steppenwolf brings to the Park a host of voices—poets and songwriters—who celebrate, interrogate, and reaffirm their American identity. These are artists in a democratic discourse, meeting an audience in this glorious, art-filled public space," said Steppenwolf Artistic Director Martha Lavey.

The annual **"Stars of Lyric Opera at Millennium Park"** concert takes place at 7:30pm on Saturday, September 8. Led by Music Director Sir Andrew Davis, the evening will feature operatic favorites sung by internationally acclaimed opera stars, including Elizabeth Futral (the star of Lyric's season opener, *La Traviata*), Isabel Bayrakdarian, James Morris, and Sondra Radvanovsky. Lead sponsorship for the Stars of Lyric Opera concert is generously provided by Harris Bank. The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust, AT&T and the Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation are co-sponsors. Additional funding is provided by The Music Performance Fund in cooperation with Local 10-208 AFM.

"Enjoying some of the world's greatest singers with the glittering skyline of Chicago as a backdrop...what a perfect way to end the summer!" said William Mason, general director of Lyric Opera of Chicago. "It is such a pleasure for Lyric Opera to perform at the wonderful Jay Pritzker Pavilion, and we love having the opportunity to give Chicagoans a free concert. Audiences can look forward to a terrific evening led by Sir Andrew Davis, who'll be making his Millennium Park debut this year."

"Blockbuster Week" will close at 4pm on Sunday, September 9 when members of the Chicago **Symphony Orchestra** return to Millennium Park to launch the CSO's 2007-2008 downtown season. Led by conductor Edwin Outwater, the Orchestra will present a program including Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. The CSO's performance is generously underwritten by the Port, Washlow and Errant families.

"We are thrilled to have this opportunity to perform in such a magnificent venue for music lovers from throughout the Chicago community," said Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association President Deborah R. Card. "We believe it is essential to make great music accessible to all, and our annual free concerts at Millennium Park are a highlight of our season."

Free Open Rehearsals

Chicagoans and visitors can catch a sneak peek of each of the Blockbuster performances during free open rehearsals in the Jay Pritzker Pavilion. The detailed rehearsal schedule will be released in August.

The Joffrey Ballet - Wednesday, September 5th - afternoon

Steppenwolf Theatre Company - Thursday, September 6th - afternoon

Lyric Opera of Chicago - Friday, September 7th - afternoon (please note that rehearsal is day before performance)

Chicago Symphony Orchestra - Sunday, September 9th – 12pm – 2:30m

Additional Steppenwolf Theatre Company Performance

In addition to the performance on September 6, Steppenwolf Theatre Company's Traffic Series will also present **Blues/Hip-Hop Intersection**, a free performance in Millennium Park's Jay Pritzker Pavilion on Monday, July 30 at 6:30pm. Directed and hosted by Sylvia Ewing, the program explores the rich blues legacy of Chicago and its parallels to hip-hop, combining poetry, performance and perspective for a multi-generational audience. Hometown harmonic hero Billy Branch and his group The Sons of Blues will be joined by an all-Chicago collection of hip-hop artists and performance poets. Kraft Foods Inc. is the exclusive sponsor of Blues/Hip-Hop Intersection at Millennium Park.

About Millennium Park

Located in downtown Chicago on Michigan Avenue between Randolph and Monroe Streets, the **24.5-acre Millennium Park** is an unprecedented center for world-class art, music, architecture and landscape design.

Among the park's prominent features are the Frank Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavilion, the most sophisticated outdoor concert venue of its kind in the United States; the interactive Crown Fountain by Jaume Plensa; the contemporary Lurie Garden designed by the team of Kathryn Gustafson, Piet Oudolf and Robert Israel; and Anish Kapoor's hugely popular Cloud Gate sculpture.

For more information about Millennium Park or the "Blockbuster Week," please visit www.millenniumpark.org or call 312-742-1168.

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