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**Joel Hall Dancers to Punctuate Culminating Performance of
Billy Strayhorn Festival on Saturday, Nov. 21 at Auditorium Theatre**

For Immediate Release

CHICAGO — For one night only, the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University presents *Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn* Saturday, Nov. 21 at 8 p.m. Under the musical direction of Bruce Mayhall Rastrelli — and punctuated by the original choreography of Joel Hall — 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.

The event is the culmination of The Billy Strayhorn Festival, a three month long citywide music festival celebrating the 100th birthday of the late 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.

“I’m thrilled to have been chosen to participate creatively in this once-in-a-lifetime project,” said Choreographer Joel Hall. “These are legendary jazz standards that I’ve known and loved my entire life ... and Strayhorn’s biography as a proud and openly gay African American man in the arts strikes a particular chord with me on a deeply personal level. It is absolutely wonderful that he is getting the richly deserved recognition that so often eluded him in his lifetime, as we honor what would have been his 100th anniversary.”

“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 supported by a grant from The Chicago Community Trust.

About Billy Strayhorn

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 Joel Hall — (Choreographer):

A native of Chicago's Cabrini Green neighborhood, Joel Hall established and co-founded the Chicago City Theatre Company in 1974. This unique performing arts organization includes the Chicago City Theatre Company, the Joel Hall Dancers, and a training facility, the Joel Hall Dancers & Center. Hall is the Artistic Director and choreographer for his dance company and the Chief Dance Instructor for the training studio. An internationally recognized icon of the dance community who, during the past 40 years, has achieved a global reputation for his Dance Company and acclaim as a

choreographer, whose work — in his own unique dance style — is based in jazz, and expresses a rich vocabulary embracing both the classical and modern dance idioms. Joel has earned numerous awards & accolades over the course of his illustrious career, including a “Lifetime Achievement Award” from the African American Arts Alliance of Chicago. Joel Hall is profiled in The History Makers series on-line, and in 2014 his History Makers interview was officially archived by the Library of Congress.

About Joel Hall Dancers:

Joel Hall Dancers & Center (JHDC) — a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization headquartered in Chicago, Illinois — relies on generous community support to fund its programming & performances. The mission of JHDC is to use the arts to enrich the lives of its community through dance performance and education. Established in 1974, the Joel Hall Dancers (JHD) express contemporary urban life through dance, while entertaining and inspiring their audiences. The signature dance style of JHD incorporates ballet, jazz, modern, funk, and “street dance” using contemporary jazz and house music to create an innovative and continuously evolving dance style that is appealing, relevant, and approachable for those frequently under-served by the arts. Both JHD and its audiences exhibit a rare and diversified spectrum of cultural, ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additional info about Joel Hall Dancers at joelhall.org.

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.” For more information visit AuditoriumTheatre.org.

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