



MEDIA RELEASE
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CONTACT: Joanna Penalva
Director of Marketing + Communications
315.443.2636 (o) | jlpenalv@syr.edu

Matthew Nerber
Marketing Content + Publications Manager
315.443.9839 (o) | mjnerber@syr.edu

BILLIE HOLIDAY MUSICAL 'LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR AND GRILL' CONTINUES SYRACUSE STAGE 50th ANNIVERSARY SEASON

The soulful musical features 15 songs made famous by the iconic jazz singer



Syracuse, New York — [Syracuse Stage](#) continues its 50th Anniversary Season with “Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill” by Lanie Roberston, a jukebox musical that takes an unflinching look at the life and times of legendary jazz singer Billie Holiday. The production runs Oct. 18 to Nov. 5 in the Archbold Theatre at Syracuse Stage, 820 E. Genesee St., Syracuse.

Born Eleanora Fagan in Philadelphia in 1915, Billie Holiday began singing in Harlem nightclubs as a teenager, adopting a stage name that honored actress Billie Dove and her father Clarence Halliday. She quickly rose to fame, praised for the dramatic, emotional renderings she gave of jazz, swing and

blues standards, employing her warm timbre, unique vocal phrasing and loose, improvised musicality.

Directed at Syracuse Stage by Jade King Carroll, "Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill" dramatizes one of Holiday's final concerts, given at the title venue in Philadelphia in 1959 just four months before she died of cirrhosis of the liver. Featuring a collection of Holiday's most celebrated hits – from the tender, romantic "When a Woman Loves a Man" and "What a Little Moonlight Can Do," to the defiant, mournful "God Bless the Child" and "Strange Fruit" – the play paints a portrait of a tortured yet brilliant artist grasping for a legacy, determined to share the joy and sorrow of jazz with those who need to hear it most.

"Billie Holiday was a trailblazing artist who had a profound impact on the American musical scene," said Bob Hupp, artistic director. "We couldn't be more excited to welcome this amazing cast and creative team to Syracuse Stage and cannot wait for our audiences to experience the power and passion of Holiday's music with this intimate and moving production."

Tracey Conyer Lee, last seen at Syracuse Stage in former artistic director Tazewell Thompson's "Constant Star" in 2003, reprises the role of Billie Holiday in this new production, having played the famed singer seven times at theatres throughout the country. Joining Lee onstage is music director Gary Mitchell Jr. as Jimmy Powers, Holiday's pianist, with DeV Vaughn Jackson providing bass accompaniment. The production team is led by director Carroll, with scenic design by Brittany Vasta, costume and wig design by Karen Perry, lighting design by Mary Louise Geiger and sound design by Syracuse Stage resident sound designer Jacqui Herter.

Nicknamed "Lady Day" by a music partner, Holiday led an often tumultuous life; after a difficult childhood, she struggled with drugs and alcohol, entered a series of troubled relationships and was arrested for narcotics possession in 1947. Because of legal issues and her ailing health, Holiday's career suffered a downturn in the 1950s, but she remained a beloved and influential vocalist throughout her lifetime and is today considered one of the most important figures in American popular music. Holiday died on July 17, 1959, in New York City, leaving behind a collection of iconic recordings that earned her four posthumous Grammy Awards, and collectively inspired generations of artists to sing the blues. First staged at the Vineyard Theatre in 1986, "Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill" premiered on Broadway in 2014 with Audra McDonald in the title role, earning her a sixth Tony Award for Actress in a Play.

All evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m. while all matinee performances begin at 2 p.m. Tickets start at \$40 with discounts available for students and groups. Tickets may be purchased online at SyracuseStage.org, by phone at 315.443.3275 or in person at the Syracuse Stage Box Office.

Pay-What-You-Will performances for "Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill" are Oct. 18 - 22 inclusive; Prologue conversations, three pre-show discussions that take place one-hour before curtain time on Oct. 22, 28 and Nov. 2; the Post-show Talkback will take place on Sunday, Oct. 29 after the 7:30 performance. Syracuse Stage has its open-captioned performances scheduled for Oct. 25 and Nov. 5 at 2 p.m. and Nov. 4 at 7:30 p.m., as well as an audio-described performance on Sunday, Nov. 4 at 2 p.m.

A special sensory friendly and open captioned performance is scheduled for Oct. 31 at 7:30 p.m. The sensory friendly performance provides a welcoming environment that lets all patrons enjoy themselves freely without judgment or inhibition. This live theatre experience invites autistic

individuals, as well as those living with ADHD, dementia and other sensory sensitivities, to enjoy a performance in a “shush free” zone. House lights will be dimmed, but not turned out completely, patrons may move about as necessary for their comfort and patrons will not be discouraged from vocalizing during the performance. Fidget toys and other materials will be provided for patrons. All tickets to the sensory friendly performance are \$35 and include the option for a 100 percent refund right up to the start of the show.

The Slutzker Family Foundation is the Presenting Sponsor for the 50th Anniversary Season. Additional season support comes from the Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation and Advance Media New York. The community partner for “Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill” is the Syracuse Chapter of Lambda Kappa Mu Sorority.

Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill

Written by Lanie Robertson
Musical arrangements by Danny Holgate
Directed by Jade King Carroll
Music direction by Gary Mitchell, Jr.
Scenic design by Brittany Vasta
Costume and wig design by Karen Perry
Lighting design by Mary Louise Geiger
Sound design by Jacqueline R. Herter
Stage Manager: Laura Jane Collins
Casting: Bass/Valle Casting

About Syracuse Stage:

Founded in 1974 and celebrating its 50th Anniversary Season, Syracuse Stage is the non-profit, professional theatre company in residence at Syracuse University. It is nationally recognized for creating stimulating theatrical work that engages Central New York audiences and significantly contributes to the artistic life of Syracuse University, where it is a vital partner in achieving the educational mission of the University’s Department of Drama. Stage’s mission is to tell stories that engage, entertain, and inspire people to see life beyond their own experience. Each season, 70,000 patrons enjoy an adventurous mix of new plays, and bold interpretations of classics and musicals, featuring the finest theatre artists. In addition, Stage maintains a vital educational outreach program that annually serves more than 15,000 students from 14 counties. Nationally, Syracuse Stage is a member of the Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for American theatre; The League of Resident Theatres (LORT), the largest professional theatre association in the country; the Professional Non-Profit Theatre Coalition (PNTC), independent venues, promoters, and festivals representing every state, Washington, D.C., and Guam. Regionally, Syracuse Stage is a member of the Arts and Cultural Leadership Alliance (ACLA), Center State CEO, the University Hill Corporation, and the East Genesee Regent Association.

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Syracuse Stage | Artistic Director: Robert M. Hupp | Managing Director: Jill A. Anderson
820 E. Genesee St. | Main: [315-443-4008](tel:315-443-4008) | Box Office: [315-443-3275](tel:315-443-3275) | www.SyracuseStage.org