



Timeless Jazz of Black, Gay Musician Brings Together Three Arts Groups for Aug. 1 Event at Symphony Hall

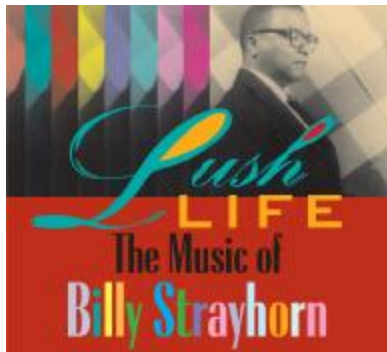
**— Macy's to Present Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus and Jazz Orchestra Atlanta
in partnership with the National Black Arts Festival in 'Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn'**

May 29, 2009 — Music has a unique power to bring people together. Thus, it's appropriate that some of the best-known classics of American jazz bring together the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus and Jazz Orchestra Atlanta in partnership with the National Black Arts Festival this summer to present a concert sponsored by Macy's. "Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn" will feature the timeless music of the man behind hits associated with Duke Ellington, Lena Horne and other superstars for one special performance Saturday evening, Aug. 1 in Symphony Hall at the Woodruff Arts Center in midtown Atlanta.

"[Billy Strayhorn](#) was chief composer and arranger for jazz giant Duke Ellington for nearly 30 years, writing some of the most memorable music of the big-band era. He was a friend and ally of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and above all, he was out and true to himself. What a perfect person and body of work for these groups to come together to celebrate," said Kevin Robison, artistic director of the AGMC.

Take the 'A' Train. Satin Doll. Lush Life.

After listing just those three of the jazz/pop classics in the Strayhorn catalog, how much more really needs to be said? *Much* more, according to Robison.



"While his music will live forever — as will the well-deserved reputations of those who performed it — Billy Strayhorn himself isn't particularly well-known outside of music circles," the AGMC director noted. "At a time when being a black man was enough of a challenge, he was also gay...and he wasn't about to go back in the closet to get in front of the band. So he chose to live his life openly and instead worked behind the scenes, leaving us this incredible body of work."

The Aug. 1 concert melds Strayhorn's musical genius with the choral excellence of the AGMC and the incredible jazz stylings of [Jazz Orchestra Atlanta](#) to present an event worthy of being included in the [National Black Arts Festival](#), being held in Atlanta July 29-Aug. 2 at the Woodruff.

"We are extremely proud to be part of the National Black Arts Festival," stated Brenda Pruitt, executive director of the chorus. "The Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus was founded nearly 30 years ago to foster musical excellence and an atmosphere and message of diversity. The NBAF's mission statement is very similar: 'to engage, cultivate and educate diverse audiences about the arts and culture of the African Diaspora and provide opportunities for artistic and creative expression.' And Jazz Orchestra Atlanta is dedicated to presenting a wide range of jazz events that appeal to a broad cross-section of the Atlanta area. This incomparable musical event will fulfill the missions of all three of these organizations, as well as continue Macy's commitment to diversity and enhancing the quality of life of its communities."

Three Guest Stars Add to Performance's Lustre

"Lush Life..." is a special composition for male voices jointly commissioned by the Los Angeles and New York Gay Men's Chorus. Featuring shimmering arrangements by Grammy[®]-award winning jazz pianist and

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composer/arranger Alan Broadbent, the production highlights Strayhorn's music through choral, instrumental and solo pieces, and his life through spoken monologues.

Appearing with the AGMC and Jazz Orchestra Atlanta will be special guests actress/activist [Donzaleigh Abernathy](#) (daughter of the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy and eyewitness to many of the events of the civil rights movement in the '60s); tenor [John Wesley Wright](#) (last showcased with the AGMC in 2008's "Divas & Dilemmas" at the new Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre); and Larry Strayhorn, chairman of the board of Strayhorn Songs, Inc, who is slated to present a free pre-concert lecture on the life and music of his late uncle.

"Who knew that the work of this quiet, proud, talented man would — 42 years after his death — bring together so many people and organizations to present such a rich and riveting evening of entertainment?" Robison said.

Tickets

Tickets for "Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn" are now on sale through the AGMC web site at www.agmchorus.org or the [Woodruff Arts Center box office](#). For more details, see the chorus web site or call the AGMC at (404) 320-1030.

About Jazz Orchestra Atlanta

Jazz Orchestra Atlanta presents local, regional and nationally recognized artists in performances of small and large jazz events which appeal to a broad cross-section of the metropolitan Atlanta community.

About the National Black Arts Festival

The mission of The National Black Arts Festival (NBAF) is to engage, cultivate and educate diverse audiences about the arts and culture of the African Diaspora and provide opportunities for artistic and creative expression.

About the AGMC

Musical excellence. High-energy entertainment. Community service. Camaraderie. *Pride*.

For over a quarter of a century, the AGMC has been a voice for diversity and inclusiveness, presenting high-quality musical entertainment that positively represents the gay community while serving the entire community at large.

The chorus and its select ensemble, Panache, have shared the stage with such notables as former poet laureate Maya Angelou, actor Leslie Jordan, The Atlanta Opera, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Atlanta Ballet, Turtle Creek Chorale, the International Gay Men's Chorus of Paris, and many more. The AGMC is a proud member of GALA Choruses, the international Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses, and Chorus America, a group of over 1,600 choruses, individuals and businesses dedicated to the continued expansion of the choral movement in North America.

The Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus is supported in part by the Metropolitan Atlanta Arts Fund and the Georgia Council for the Arts through the appropriations of the Georgia General Assembly. The council is a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. Corporate sponsors for the AGMC and its 28th season include Window Media, LLC (Southern Voice and David publications), Metrotainment Cafes (Einstein's, Joe's on Juniper, Cowtipplers, Garrison's, and Hudson Grille restaurants), IHR - Integral HR, Cooper Music, Kaiser Permanente, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Habersham Gardens, and Diageo.

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