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**Intimate Portrayal of Legendary Jazz Musician, Billie Holiday, Kicks off
The Phoenix Theatre Company's 104th Season**

(PHOENIX – Aug. 21, 2023) Have you ever witnessed a legend firsthand? Behold the tour-de-force portrait of iconic jazz songstress, Billie Holiday, in “Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill,” the first show in The Phoenix Theatre Company's 104th season, onstage Sept. 6 through Nov. 26, 2023.

In the Tony-award nominated musical, audiences get an up close and intimate look at one of the nation's most famous jazz musicians. The show takes place in 1959 in a seedy Philadelphia bar just four months before her tragic death. The depths of “Lady Day” include soulful and heart-wrenching songs from her extraordinary music catalog and touch on her battles with alcoholism and drug abuse in her later years.

Set on stage with a live band, featuring Deryk George on piano, Wallace Steele on bass, and Terry “LT” Green on drums, the performances are gritty and intertwined with salty, often humorous anecdotes that provide a riveting portrait of the iconic lady and her music. The one-woman show features Yolanda London* as Holiday and Jari Haile as her understudy.

This is not the first time London has portrayed Holiday at The Phoenix Theatre Company. She was part of the heralded 2016 production of “Lady Day” and has since played Holiday in productions across the country including shows in Alabama and Pennsylvania. This will be her fifth time in the role.

“I would definitely say I feel connected to Billie Holiday in many ways,” said London. “I find her music incredibly moving and emotional. I also feel for her. Her story is one of deep sadness and remarkable perseverance. When she sings, I feel her music in my soul. It sounds hyperbolic, but it's true. I find her music incredibly moving and emotional.”

This production is especially poignant for London who will be performing the story at the same age Holiday was when she died. “I feel, now more than ever, I'm ready to tell her story,” she said.

“Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill” will take place in the intimate Judith Hades Theatre on The Phoenix Theatre Company’s Downtown campus. The cabaret-style theatre layout enhances the connection between audience members and performers. “Lady Day” is a precursor to big changes happening at the 104-year-old theatre as it is set to break ground on a massive renovation and expansion project this fall.

In her main stage directorial debut at The Phoenix Theatre Company, Chanel Bragg, feels a tremendous responsibility to share the highs and lows of the prolific vocalist’s life whose cannon includes recognizable songs like “What a Little Moonlight Can Do”, “God Bless the Child,” “Strange Fruit,” and “Ain’t Nobody’s Business if I do.”

“I am grateful for the opportunity to tell this story, and to pay a great deal of respect and reverence to the legend with introspection through the Black female lens,” said Bragg. “I have always held a deeply personal connection to Billie Holiday, and the universality of her story of both joy and immense pain. I am hopeful this production will leave audiences as enamored with her as I have been since I was a young child.”

Bragg started her professional career at The Phoenix Theatre Company in 2010 when she made her on-stage debut in “Hairspray.” She has since performed in countless shows at the theatre and co-founded two initiatives: The Soul of Broadway performance troupe in 2009 and The United Colours of Arizona Theatre in 2016 with an emphasis to inspire diversity, equity and true inclusion in the local arts community.

“There are a lot of strong emotions in this show - love, pain, and the ability to lean on each other when times are tough,” Bragg added. “Billie was not afraid to take risks, she is a truth-teller, a disrupter and an unmatched artist. I am proud to be able to bring her story to Valley audiences again.”

Select Mask Required Performances

Select performances have been designated "Mask Required" to ensure all audiences have an opportunity to attend a performance in an environment they are comfortable in: Saturday, Oct. 28, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.

ASL/Audio Describe Night

Audio Description and American Sign Language Interpretation are available for each production. ASL/Audio Describe Night is Thursday, Sept. 28, 2023 for “Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill.”

**Denotes members of Actors’ Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.*

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ABOUT THE PHOENIX THEATRE COMPANY

The Phoenix Theatre Company is not only the largest professional regional theatre company in the state, with nearly 500 performances each year on multiple stages, but it’s also the first arts organization in Arizona and a founding member of the Central Arts District. Committed to advancing the performing arts in the Valley, The Phoenix Theatre Company's mission is to create exceptional theatrical experiences that inspire hope and understanding. For more information about our upcoming shows, campus venue, located at 1825 N. Central Ave. in Phoenix, outreach programs, and more, visit www.phoenixtheatre.com.