



INVISIBLE THEATRE PRESS RELEASE

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IT continues its 51st Anniversary Season

With

BILLIE! BACKSTAGE WITH LADY DAY

Written by and Starring

Synthia L. Hardy

TWO PERFORMANCES ONLY!

Saturday, March 18, 2023 at 7:30 PM

Sunday, March 19, 2023 at 2:00 PM

The Berger Performing Arts Center

1200 W. Speedway Blvd., Tucson, Arizona 85745

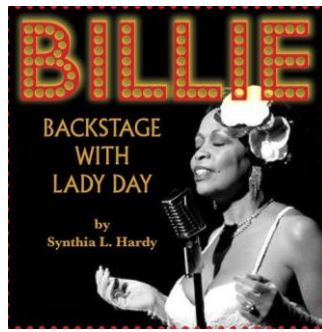
(February 20, 2023, Tucson, Arizona); The Invisible Theatre continues its 51st Anniversary Season with the NAACP award-winning musical **BILLIE! BACKSTAGE WITH LADY DAY** written by and starring the incomparable Synthia L. Hardy, directed by Bryan Rasmussen and also features Lanny Hartley as the “Piano Man”. This award winning production takes you back to an era where the joints were jumping and Hollywood was hopping. **BILLIE!** is a musically haunting, unpredictable journey into the winding road of love, joy, blues, racism, and astounding hit songs that tell the story of the amazing Billie Holiday. Actor-singer-playwright Synthia L. Hardy brings the story of Billie Holiday to vibrant life in this unforgettable musical featuring some of the 20th Century greatest hits, including “God Bless the Child”, “Strange Fruit”, “Good Morning Heartache”, and “Lover Man”.

**“Synthia paints a MASTERFUL PORTRAIT, reminding us how
Billie Holiday brought tremendous beauty into the world.”**

- Jazziz

Made possible in part Through the Generous Support of
Sandy Maxfield and Gail Fitzhugh

Please call (520) 882-9721 for reservations and information or
go to www.invisibletheatre.com for online ticket sales.



BILLIE! BACKSTAGE WITH LADY DAY, written by and Starring Synthia L. Hardy and directed by Bryan Rasmussen, will run March 18 and 19, 2023 at the Berger Performing Arts Center at 1200 West Speedway Blvd., Tucson, Arizona 85745

The single show ticket price is \$45. All seats are reserved. Additional discounts are available for groups, seniors, active military, and students.

The running time is 2 hours with an intermission.

BILLIE! BACKSTAGE WITH LADY DAY is recommended for ages 18 and above.

TO PURCHASE TICKETS OR FOR INFORMATION:

Tickets are available for purchase by calling the Invisible Theatre Box Office at (520) 882-9721 and are also available 24/7 on-line at www.invisibletheatre.com.

Visa, MasterCard, Discover, and American Express are accepted.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:

The Berger Performing Arts Center is fully accessible to patrons using wheelchairs or with other mobility challenges. Seating areas to accommodate persons using wheelchairs are located in the theatre. If patrons require special seating, they should inform the Box Office at (520) 882-9721.

ABOUT THIS PRESS RELEASE:

This mailing list is for members of the professional media and allied organizations who have requested e-mail press releases from The Invisible Theatre. If you no longer wish to receive e-mail press releases or if there is someone else with your organization that should be added to our list, send a message to cathy@invisibletheatre.com or phone Alayna at (520) 884-0672 with your request.

ONLINE MEDIA MATERIALS:

Two high-resolution photos of Synthia L. Hardy, photo credit courtesy of the artist, are attached to this press release and are also available at www.invisibletheatre.com/press.

THE INVISIBLE THEATRE:

The Invisible Theatre (IT) of Tucson, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, is dedicated to producing quality theatre and arts education experiences for all facets of the community, in an intimate setting that showcases local professional talent and guest artists. Started in 1971 as an arena for local playwrights, the theatre has expanded its programs to include adaptations of classics and recent Off-Broadway plays and musicals, while continuing to encourage new playwrights through both full productions and stage readings. Our award-winning arts education program for special needs children focuses on ability rather than dwelling on disability. Our commitment to artistic excellence, diversity, equity and inclusion and quality has made the Invisible Theatre a very visible force in the local, national, and international arts scene.

SYNTHIA L. HARDY

Playwright and Star



SYNTHIA L. HARDY is an award-winning actress/singer/dancer/writer who has appeared on film, T.V., commercials (both radio and T.V.) and on stages, nationally and internationally. She received the NAACP Theatre Award for Best One Person Show for the show she wrote and performed in, "BILLIE! BACKSTAGE WITH LADY DAY", about the legendary Billie Holiday. For the same show, Synthia also received two Artistic Director's Achievement Awards (ADA) for Best Actress in a Musical/Comedy and Best One Person Show. Synthia received an Emmy Award for the PBS documentary, *Precious Memories: Strolling 47th Street*. She has received various other awards for her talents. Synthia has written and performs in her own cabaret show, DINNER MUSICALE WITH SYNTHIA & FRIENDS. She's toured, performing in Motown and Oldies Tributes. Performing as Billie Holiday is such a joy for Synthia. The familiar and unfamiliar stories told that are shared in this show makes one sing, fall in love, laugh, cry, get angry and feel the pain of Billie Holiday. Synthia is so blessed to be doing what she loves in the entertainment field. It allows her to travel, meet interesting new people and touch people's hearts.

BRYAN RASMUSSEN

Director



BRYAN RASMUSSEN, Artistic Director of Whitefire Theatre, has produced over 200 shows as well as over 50 world premieres. He recently directed the world premiere solo show EVOLUTION OF SOUL 685 as well as the solo-musical DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE with pop star Erin Jividen, opening this month Off-Broadway. He also founded the famous Itchey Foot Cabaret in downtown L.A. He directed and starred in the 50th Anniversary production of Harold Pinter's THE DUMB WAITER as well as directing the world premieres of the eco-musical SEASON OF CHANGE and MARK TWAIN IN THE 21st CENTURY and produced Judy Tenuda's MOUNTAIN GIRL'S musical. He recently finished directing his critically acclaimed version of BLOOD BROTHERS and is also currently performing in and producing FRIDAY NIGHT QUICKIES as well as recurring on the NBC hit show *Southland*. He'd like to dedicate this production to his brother, Larry.

LANNY HARTLEY

Piano Man

LANNY HARTLEY (*Piano Man*) is a jazz pianist, conductor, and composer who began his career as the pianist for his church in Burlington, New Jersey. With a solid gospel music background, he went on to study Music Education at Indiana University. Jazz piano became his love and he performed with such great Jazz artists as Wes Alexandria, Ernie Andes, Jon Hendricks, Lou Rawls, Linda Hopkins, and Ernestine Anderson. Lanny has also played for such Pop Artists as Thelma Houston, The Fifth Dimension, Joe Tex, Syreeta Wright, Al Wilson, and David Clayton Thomas. He has been the Musician Conductor/Director for such shows as *AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'*, *TRACKS* (Yolanda King), *THE LATE GREAT LADIES OF BLUES AND JAZZ* (Sandra Reeves), *THE DELLA REESE MUSICAL TOUR*, and *DINAH WAS* (New York, Los Angeles, and Williamstown). Hartley's screen credits include the television movie, *Sinatra*, as a blind piano player, the motion picture *Harlem Nights* as a piano player, and as the church organist in the ABC television series *Soul Man*, starring Dan Ackroyd.

BILLIE HOLIDAY

1915-1959



BILLIE HOLIDAY was a trail-blazing musical artist, known as perhaps the first female vocalist to use her voice in the style of jazz improvisation. Recording first with *Benny Goodman*, she became the first Black female vocalist to front a white band, that of Artie Shaw. She also performed with *Count Basie* and *Duke Ellington*. She had long professional associations with saxophonist *Lester Young* (who named her Lady Day; she called him Prez) and pianist *Teddy Wilson*.

Born to poverty in Philadelphia, she was a victim of sexual assault while still a child and sentenced by the court to a Catholic correctional institution. It was only her first experience with the court, however. She was convicted at age 13 (along with her mother) of prostitution. Subsequent arrests involved possession of narcotics and substance abuse. Despite a turbulent life, abusive relationships, and racism, she prevailed to become one of the greatest jazz and blues artists of her time, before her untimely demise at age 44 from cirrhosis of the liver. In addition to multiple hit recordings, she sold out Carnegie Hall *three* times.