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MAYOR EMANUEL DESIGNATES 2019 AS THE 'YEAR OF CHICAGO THEATRE'

First-of-its-kind in U.S., citywide initiative will shine a spotlight on Chicago's vibrant theatre scene

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) Commissioner Mark Kelly, League of Chicago Theatres Executive Director Deb Clapp, and many other civic, arts and theatre leaders today announced plans to designate 2019 as the 'Year of Chicago Theatre.' This citywide, year-long focus on theatre is the first of its kind in the U.S. The initiative will include theatre performances – including improv, dance, opera, puppetry and more – and special events for the public at hundreds of cultural venues, theaters, parks and neighborhood locations throughout the city.

"From world-renowned, Tony Award-winning stages to intimate storefront productions across the city, theater is essential to the cultural fabric of Chicago," said Mayor Emanuel. "The Year of Chicago Theatre is a celebration of the talented actors, actresses, producers and directors throughout the city and downtown that work tirelessly to entertain audiences from around the world and right here at home."

The City of Chicago and its partners will also launch a marketing campaign that leverages a new brand for Chicago theatre; provide additional financial grants to theatre projects; encourage dialog around inclusion and equity; and call on civic, philanthropic, arts and business leaders to support the theatre community.

Commitments and preliminary plans include:

- Theatre activations and a theatre-themed Film Series throughout the summer at Millennium Park, Chicago's town square
- Theatre-themed public programs and exhibitions at the Chicago Cultural Center
- \$200,000 in financial grants to theatres and other nonprofit theatre programs, via the Cultural Grants Program
- Theatre displays at Expo 72 (Hot Tix) and the Chicago Cultural Center Welcome Center
- A marketing campaign for residents that leverages the new brand for Chicago theatre

The Year of Chicago Theatre follows the success of 2017 and 2018 initiatives celebrating Chicago's public art and its creative youth. Its mission is to make 2019 a year in which the city of Chicago emphasizes the prominence of its expansive and innovative theatre industry.

“To truly fall in love with Chicago, you must go to our theaters. This is where the city bares its fearless soul,” said DCASE Commissioner Mark Kelly. “From joy to heartache and every feeling in between, Chicago theatre tells stories that evoke big emotions. Stories that take risks, inspire awe, ask tough questions – and dare audiences to do the same. Through Broadway musicals or storefront plays and improv, the energy of the city comes alive in our theaters. And with a diverse collection of over 250 dynamic theaters throughout our neighborhoods, there’s always a seat waiting for you.” Additionally, a partial list of partner organization commitments includes:

- A redesigned ChicagoPlays.com website (League of Chicago Theatres)
- Theatre-themed events in all 77 community areas, as part of the Night Out in the Parks series (Chicago Park District)
- Theatre displays and Hot Tix pop-ups during major conventions at McCormick Place (Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority)
- Advertising for Chicago theatre at the airports (Department of Aviation)
- Additional resources for Chicago Theatre Week – and a major marketing campaign for visitors that leverages the new brand for Chicago theatre (Choose Chicago)

“We were thrilled when DCASE approached us with the idea of a City-designated Year of Chicago Theatre,” said Chicago Theatres Executive Director Deb Clapp. “Our dream goal for this initiative is that every single Chicagoan will be welcomed into a theater. Also, that every Chicagoan will recognize and appreciate this extraordinary cultural asset, and that Chicagoans and visitors will embrace theatre as one of the things that truly sets Chicago apart from other cities.”

Created by marketing agency FCB Chicago, the new brand positioning for Chicago theatre (“Chicago theatre is the fearless soul of Chicago.”) seeks to boost awareness and visibility of Chicago’s vibrant theatre community, marketing Chicago as a theatre destination and sustainably growing audiences for Chicago theatres. The brand was created in collaboration with DCASE, Choose Chicago, Broadway In Chicago, World Business Chicago, and the League of Chicago Theatres.

The Year of Chicago Theatre will also encourage dialog within Chicago’s theatre and philanthropic communities around inclusion and equity issues – and will seek to expand the geographic scope of Chicago theatre, especially on the city’s south and west sides.

The birthplace of storefront theatre and improv, Chicago is home to some 250 theatres downtown and in neighborhoods throughout the city. It boasts five Tony Award-winning theatres, the largest touring Broadway organization in the nation, and more world premieres than any other city.

Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events is dedicated to enriching Chicago’s artistic vitality and cultural vibrancy. This includes fostering the development of Chicago’s non-profit arts sector, independent working artists and for-profit arts businesses; providing a framework to guide the City’s future cultural and economic growth, via the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan; marketing the City’s cultural assets to a worldwide audience; and presenting high-quality, free and affordable cultural programs for residents and visitors.

League of Chicago Theatres

The League of Chicago Theatres is an alliance of theatres which leverages its collective strength to promote, support, and advocate for Chicago’s theatre industry locally, nationally, and internationally. The League of Chicago Theatres Foundation is dedicated to enhancing the art of

theatre in the Chicago area through audience development and support services for theatres and theatre professionals. For a comprehensive list of Chicago productions, visit the League of Chicago Theatres website, ChicagoPlays.com