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BLOCKBUSTER WEEK RETURNS TO MILLENNIUM PARK SEPTEMBER 3-11, 2008

**Featuring Chicago's World-Renowned Performing Arts Organizations:
The Joffrey Ballet, Lyric Opera of Chicago and Steppenwolf Theatre Company
Along with NPR's *Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me!* and Andrew Bird in Concert**

For the fourth year, Millennium Park will be home to Blockbuster Week, featuring free performances by some of Chicago's most acclaimed performing arts organizations. Taking place on the stage of the Jay Pritzker Pavilion from September 3 through 11, 2008, Blockbuster Week will again include performances by **The Joffrey Ballet, Lyric Opera of Chicago** and the **Steppenwolf Theatre Company**, along with **Andrew Bird in Concert**, presented by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, and a live taping of NPR's *Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me*.

"Millennium Park offers exciting programming all summer long, but during Blockbuster Week, visitors get a chance to see some of our city's most beloved cultural gems on the stage of the Pritzker Pavilion," said Lois Weisberg, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. "This year, Blockbuster Week expands to include five different free programs and truly offers something for everyone—from opera to jazz to theater and more."

Blockbuster Week kicks off on Wednesday, September 3 at 6:30 p.m. with the incomparable Chicago-based musician and lyricist, **Andrew Bird in Concert**, presented by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. A violin virtuoso, Bird plays guitar and glockenspiel and adds singing and whistling to his sonic textures and imaginative lyrics. The concert begins with the Afro-beat sounds of Chicago's own Occidental Brothers Dance Band International.

Chicagoans and visitors alike can take part in a live taping of NPR's hilarious weekly quiz show, *Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me!* on Thursday, September 4 at 6:30 p.m. Everyone is invited to test their knowledge against some of the best and brightest in the news and entertainment industry and see if they can sort real news from fiction.

The annual **Stars of Lyric Opera at Millennium Park** concert will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, September 6. Led by Music Director Sir Andrew Davis, the evening will feature operatic favorites sung by some of opera's most celebrated voices, many of whom will be featured in Lyric's 2008-2009 season, including *Manon* stars Natalie Dessay, Jonas Kaufmann, and Raymond Aceto; *Pearl Fishers* star Nicole Cabell, and more. The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust, AT&T and the Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation are co-sponsors of this event, with additional funding provided by The Music Performance and Film Funds in cooperation with the Chicago Federation of Musicians

Local 10-208 AFM. The concert will be broadcast live on 98.7WFMT by The Bucksbaum Family Lyric Opera Broadcasts, with matching funds provided by The Crown Family, Richard P. and Susan Kiphart, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

On Monday, September 8 at 6:30 p.m., **Steppenwolf Theatre Company** will celebrate the spirit of the city with *Dream Chicago* which highlights the visionary dreams from the past that gave character to the city of big shoulders and inspired its people to imagine a collective future. *Dream Chicago*, directed by Steppenwolf Theatre Company Associate Artist, Jessica Thebus, features ensemble members, including Artistic Director Martha Lavey performing in song, as well as spoken word.

Blockbuster Week will come to a close at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 11 when the world-renowned **Joffrey Ballet** presents *An Evening of Remembrances, A Salute to the Victims and Families of 9.11*, an unforgettable evening dedicated to remembering those who were lost on September 11, 2001.

Millennium Park is located in the heart of downtown Chicago. It is bordered by Michigan Ave. to the west, Columbus Dr. to the east, Randolph St. to the north and Monroe St. to the south. Convenient parking is located in the Millennium Park Garage (entrance on Columbus at Monroe or Randolph) and at the Grant Park North and East Monroe Garages, all located within a short walking distance to Millennium Park.

Millennium Park is an award-winning center for art, music, architecture and landscape design. The result of a unique partnership between the City of Chicago and the philanthropic community, the 24.5-acre park features the work of world-renowned architects, planners, artists and designers. Among Millennium Park's prominent features are the Frank Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavilion, the most sophisticated outdoor concert venue of its kind in the United States; the interactive Crown Fountain by Jaume Plensa; the contemporary Lurie Garden designed by the team of Gustafson Guthrie Nichol, Piet Oudolf and Robert Israel; and Anish Kapoor's hugely popular Cloud Gate sculpture. Since its opening in July 2004, Millennium Park has more than 12 million of people, making it one of the most popular destinations in Chicago.

For more information about **Millennium Park**, call 312.742.1168 or visit www.millenniumpark.org.

ADDITIONAL PRESS CONTACTS:

Andrew Bird in Concert: Contact Kennon Brown, kennon.brown@cityofchicago.org, 312.744.8948

Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me: Contact Anna Christopher, achristopher@npr.org

The Joffrey Ballet: Contact Beth Silverman, beth@silvermangroupchicago.com, 312.932.9950

Steppenwolf Theatre Company: Contact David Rosenberg, drosenberg@steppenwolf.org, 312.654.5656

Lyric Opera of Chicago: Contact Magda Krance, mkrance@lyricopera.org, 312.827.5924