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## **SHELebration: A TRIBUTE TO SHEL SILVERSTEIN AT MILLENNIUM PARK JULY 13, 2009, 6:30 PM**

### **Celebrate Millennium Park's 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday with a Night of Song and Spoken Word Honoring the Legendary Poet, Author, Illustrator and Songwriter**

Millennium Park will celebrate its fifth anniversary with a blockbuster event of song and spoken word called **SHELebration: A Tribute to Shel Silverstein**. This night of song and performance honoring the legendary Chicago poet, author, illustrator and Grammy Award-winning songwriter will take place on Monday, July 13, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion. The program is free to the public.

**SHELebration** musical guests will include longtime Silverstein friend Bobby Bare and Bobby Bare Jr., with the Bare Family Band, an all-star band from the worlds of indie-rock and country music (including the acclaimed Nashville guitarist and producer, Chip Young; drummer Patrick Hallahan of the famed rock group, *My Morning Jacket*; steel guitarist Chris Scruggs, grandson to Grammy Award-winner, Earl Scruggs; and Richie Kirkpatrick, bassist of the band *Ghostfinger*). Also performing are friend and Silverstein musical collaborator, Pat Dailey and indie-rock superstar Will Oldham (aka Bonnie Prince Billy), along with Chicagoans Jon Langford and Sally Timms of the Mekons and the "First Lady of Children's Music," Ella Jenkins.

Additionally, the program will feature Steve Edwards of WBEZ, Chicago Public Radio, Miss Lori's Campus of PBS Kids, legendary spoken word jazz artist, Ken Nordine, poet and Louder Than A Bomb youth poetry festival founder Kevin Coval, Second City and Saturday Night Live alumni member Tim Kazurinsky, storytellers from WNEP Theater's KIDSKALD program and members of the Annoyance Theater Company, who will read from Silverstein classic books, Where the Sidewalk Ends, A Light in the Attic, Falling Up, Runny Babbit, Don't Bump the Glump! and Other Fantasies.

"Shel Silverstein was beloved by children and adults alike for his unique imagination and bold brand of humor. We are delighted to honor this Chicago treasure on the occasion of Millennium Park's fifth anniversary week," said Lois Weisberg, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs.

One of the highlights of the evening will be the world debut of a previously unreleased Silverstein poem and illustration, entitled "Birthday" provided by the Shel Silverstein estate to Millennium Park for **SHELebration**. "Birthday" is one of twelve poems that will be released for the first time in the fall when A Light in the Attic is reissued and will make its print debut in **SHELebration's** commemorative program booklet.

**SHELebration** is a special presentation of the Millennium Park Family Fun Festival presented by Target and is the final performance of the Great Performers of Illinois Festival, an annual celebration of the arts unique to Illinois taking place July 10-12, 2009. SHELebration is supported by HarperCollins Publishers, The Shel Silverstein Estate and the Shel Silverstein Archives.

Shel Silverstein was born in Chicago on September 25, 1930 and began drawing creatively at an early age. He grew up on Palmer Street and attended Darwin Elementary, Roosevelt High School, University Of Illinois and Roosevelt University. Returning from the Army in the mid-1950s, Shel started contributing cartoons to magazines like *Sports Illustrated* and Chicago-based *Playboy*. He went on to become an illustrator, playwright, poet, performer, recording artist and Grammy Award-winning songwriter. He is best known as the author of iconic books of prose including such modern classics as The Giving Tree, Lafcadio: The Lion Who Shot Back, A Giraffe and a Half, The Missing Piece, and The Missing Piece Meets the Big O. His immensely popular poetry collections are Where the Sidewalk Ends; A Light in the Attic; Falling Up and Don't Bump the Glump! And Other Fantasies. Runny Babbit, a posthumous collection of poetic spoonerisms, was conceived before his death in 1999.

Silverstein's books, which he also illustrated, are characterized by a deft mixing of the sly and the serious, the macabre and the just plain silly. He also enjoyed a long, successful career as a songwriter with credits that include "The Unicorn" for the Irish Rovers, "Cover of the Rolling Stone" and "Sylvia's Mother" for Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show, "A Boy Named Sue" for Johnny Cash, and many others. His song "I'm Checking Out" was written for the Mike Nichols film, *Postcards from the Edge*, performed by Meryl Streep, and nominated for an Academy Award. Silverstein won a Grammy Award for Best Children's Album for his audio version of Where the Sidewalk Ends. Shel recorded his songs on a variety of albums and composed many others for his many friends. He wrote plays and screenplays (including *Things Change* with David Mamet), and continued to create songs, poems, stories and drawings throughout his lifetime.

Shel Silverstein spent much of his time in Greenwich Village, Key West, Martha's Vineyard, Sausalito, Nashville, and his hometown Chicago. He was a lifelong White Sox fan and worked as a hotdog vendor at the original Comiskey Park when he was young.

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 of Millennium Park.

Millennium Park, managed and programmed by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, 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 welcomed more than 16 million people, making it one of the most popular destinations in Chicago.

For more information about Millennium Park, please visit [www.millenniumpark.org](http://www.millenniumpark.org) or call 312.742.1168.

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