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SAN DIEGO THEATRES CELEBRATES A CENTURY OF THE ARTS: BALBOA THEATRE'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Three Days of Celebratory Programming, March 28-30, 2024, Will Mark This Milestone

SAN DIEGO (December 13, 2023) — [San Diego Theatres](https://www.sandiegotheatres.org) is thrilled to announce a **three-day celebration** of the 100th Anniversary of the iconic **Balboa Theatre**, a symbol of San Diego's arts and cultural heritage since its grand opening in 1924. The various community-focused events, taking place **March 28-30, 2024**, will showcase talented artists and performers from across San Diego and beyond while honoring Balboa Theatre's rich history and legacy. Tickets for all events will be available in January 2024.

San Diego Theatres is the nonprofit arts organization that operates both San Diego Civic Theatre and Balboa Theatre in downtown San Diego. "As the stewards of two of the city's most important arts spaces, all of us at San Diego Theatres are honored to celebrate Balboa Theatre, its enduring legacy, and its exciting future," says Abigail Buell, Vice President of Strategy and Business Development. Over the course of three days, San Diego Theatres will host a range of events honoring the many roles the venue has played across the last century. **They include:**

- **March 28:** Balboa 100th Anniversary Gala featuring Hershey Felder and the Great American Songbook
 - Hear (and sing along with) 100 years of famous American music in a lively performance led by acclaimed pianist, playwright, and actor Hershey Felder.
 - Proceeds from the event's gala seats will benefit the Balboa Theatre Grant Fund, an annual grant program that provides our local nonprofit partners access to spaces and services at the Balboa Theatre at a reduced cost.
- **March 29:** Centennial Salute: Honoring San Diego's Military at the Balboa Theatre
 - A screening of the silent film "The Flying Fleet," accompanied by the Wonder Morton theatre organ, will be the highlight of an evening celebrating Balboa Theatre's roles as both a silent movie theatre, and a wartime home for sailors.
- **March 30:** Toons & Tunes: A Morning of Family Fun
 - Children and their families can enjoy a screening of classic cartoons accompanied by our whimsical Wonder Morton theatre organ. There will be a kids' Roaring '20s costume parade before the screening begins!
- **March 30:** San Diego Spotlight: A Night of Community Events
 - Experience musicians, singers, and dancers from around San Diego, as we welcome both legacy nonprofit community partners and an exciting group of newcomers to our stage for the finale of our celebration.

The beautifully restored Wonder Morton Organ, an icon of the silent film era, will feature prominently across the weekend as a nod to the Balboa Theatre's early life as a home of silent



films and vaudeville performances. Additional event details, gala seats, and ticket information will be announced in January 2024 at <https://sandiegotheratres.org/balboatheatre100>.

Members of the community are encouraged to follow San Diego Theatres' social media accounts ([@sdtheatres](#) and [@sdbalboatheatre](#)) as we count down to the celebration!

A Brief History of Balboa Theatre:

- **March 1924:** Architect William Wheeler's masterpiece, the Balboa Theatre, opened as a vaudeville and cinema theatre. The opening night dazzled audiences with vaudeville acts like Fanchon & Marco and the Sunkist Beauties, along with a screening of the silent film "Lilies of the Field" and a personal appearance from the film's stars.
- **1934:** Remodeled as "Teatro Balboa," the theatre became a hub for contemporary films from Mexico City, embracing San Diego's diverse population.
- **World War II:** The theatre's office wing housed sailors prior to shipping out of San Diego, contributing to the war effort.
- **1959-1985:** Saved from potential demolition by the Russo family, the Balboa Theatre operated as an action movie house.
- **1972 & 1996:** The theatre was listed as a City of San Diego Historic Site, and recognized on the National Register of Historic Places, respectively.
- **January 2008:** A significant restoration revitalized the theatre, reopening it as a 1,335-seat performing arts venue managed and operated by San Diego Theatres.
- **September 2009:** The Wonder Morgan Organ, one of only five manufactured, played its first notes in its new home, the Balboa Theatre.

About San Diego Theatres:

San Diego Theatres, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organization that operates two theatres in downtown San Diego. The San Diego Civic Theatre has been the region's largest and greatest attended performing arts venue for nearly 60 years, and the 100-year-old Balboa Theatre hosts concerts, comedians, and more in the heart of the Gaslamp district. The theatres serve over 500,000 patrons each year through arts and entertainment presentations, many of which are produced by resident nonprofit arts partners, including: San Diego Opera, San Diego Symphony, La Jolla Music Society, Golden State Ballet, Classics 4 Kids, and more. San Diego Theatres' mission is to deliver exceptional performing arts and educational experiences, foster collaboration and partnerships, and create an accessible place for all people to enjoy the arts.

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