

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Hartford Circus Fire Stories Retold at 70th Anniversary Hartford Public Library
Performance Event**



(Emmett Kelly, famous circus clown, Hartford, CT, July 6, 1944/Image courtesy of the *Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library*)

HARTFORD, Connecticut (June 16, 2014) - **On Tuesday, July 8, 2014** Hartford Public Library and the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford, in partnership with the City of Hartford Fire Department, will present a **specially commissioned theatrical performance based on the memories of survivors of the Hartford Circus Fire, a tragedy which occurred 70 years ago this summer.** Performed by Hartford theater group HartBeat Ensemble, Inc., the piece is gleaned directly from retold memories of that terrible afternoon from its survivors, collected over the past year by the staff of the Library's Hartford

History Center. **The event will take place at 5:30 p.m. at the Downtown Library, 500 Main Street, Hartford.**

The performance and moderated discussion that follows will offer opportunities to explore why the nation's deadliest circus fire – which killed 168 people and injured nearly 700 - haunts us still. More than 40 percent of the victims were women and children under 15, and the cause of the fire has never been established. In a war-time city where family and social cohesion were treasured, the circus fire rocked Hartford to its core and left in its wake profound social change, landmark arbitration, and questions still waiting for answers.

“We know that the Hartford Circus Fire holds a deep place in our city’s collective history, and we want to honor that,” said Brenda Miller, the Library’s chief officer for cultural affairs and public programming, as well as the executive director of the Hartford History Center. “We have some very powerful materials on the fire in our collection, and we would like to bring them together with the human dimension and memories that still exist today.”

HartBeat Ensemble is a Hartford-based performance company that creates theater productions based on stories drawn from contemporary life in Connecticut. The company uses the riches of their own unique play-creation process, which focuses on first-hand accounts and interviews, to extend the boundaries of theater. In remembrance of the significant event, Hartford Public Library worked closely with HartBeat Ensemble to create the original piece in honor of the 70th anniversary of the Hartford Circus Fire, and the completed script will be entered into the Library’s historical collections, housed in its Hartford History Center, and the film archived in the Library’s digital repository for public online access.

For more information, please visit hplct.org.

ABOUT JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER HARTFORD

The Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford is a non-profit organization dedicated to collecting, preserving and exhibiting historical, political, economic, social and religious documents, photographs, memorabilia and oral histories as it relates to the Jewish community of Greater Hartford. By providing historical information and resources to individuals, schools, colleges, civic and social organizations, the Society hopes to promote historical research and create a community awareness and understanding of the growth and development of the numerous Jewish contributions to the Greater Hartford area.

ABOUT [HARTFORD HISTORY CENTER](#)

The Hartford History Center is a special collection of books, photographs, manuscripts and ephemera relating to over 300 years of community life in Connecticut’s capital city. The HHC is home to the Hartford Collection, which includes works by Mark Twain, Lydia Huntley Sigourney, Thomas Tryon, Noah Webster, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Chuck Stone and Wallace Stevens. The Hartford History Center is located on the third floor of the Hartford Public Library at 500 Main Street and is open Tuesday-Friday, 1:00pm-5:00pm. For more information, call 860.695.6297. hhc.hplct.org

ABOUT [HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY](#)

As a finalist for the 2014 National Medal from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, Hartford

Public Library has been recognized as national leader in redefining the urban public library in the 21st century as an innovative and stimulating place where people can learn and discover, explore their passions, and find a rich array of resources that contribute to a full life. Hartford Public Library provides free resources that inspire reading, guide learning, and encourage individual exploration. Serving the residents of Hartford and beyond at its nine branches and Downtown location, Hartford Public Library receives more than 860,000 visits per year from adults, children and families seeking early literacy opportunities, work skills training, civic engagement, arts enrichment, and so much more. Visit hplct.org.

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