

100 YEARS OF WOW!
Fun Facts about Miller Outdoor Theatre



1. Admission to Miller Outdoor Theatre (MOT) is always free of charge.
2. MOT offers the largest “always free” program of its kind in the United States.
3. Annually, there are 8 months of culturally diverse performances at MOT with everything from rock to Bach.
4. MOT presents more than 120 free performances and programs annually. Diversity has become a mainstay of Miller programming managing director Cissy Segall Davis points out. “This place speaks to what Houston is all about.” Miller offers the most diverse, highest-quality series of performances possible with this most “extraordinary gift” from the city of Houston to its residents and visitors.
5. In its 100 years, millions of people from around the world have seen a live performance at the theatre. For some Miller Outdoor Theatre opens the door to the cultural arts where performances can be enjoyed outdoors in beautiful Hermann Park.
6. Miller Outdoor Theatre, first known as Miller Memorial Theatre, was named for its benefactor Jesse Wright Miller, a mining engineer and cotton broker.
7. Miller Memorial Theatre was dedicated “To the Arts of Music, Poetry, Drama and Oratory” on May 12, 1923.
8. Designed by William Ward Watkin and built by Tom Tellepsen, the original venue was an amphitheater surrounded by 10-Corinthean-style limestone columns on either side.
9. The two live oaks that bookend the theater were already established in 1923 and still stand proud sentry 100 years later.
10. MOT is located on 7.5 acres of land in Hermann Park.
11. Under the Miller covered seating area are 1,705 seats for visitors and 20 wheelchairs spaces. Its beloved sloping hillside can accommodate 4,500 more guests on blankets or in chairs.
12. Lawn chairs are placed to the right on Miller’s hill, blankets to the left.
13. On May 12, 1923, the theatre hosted its debut performance “Springtime of Our Nation,” a pageant with 2,500 performers.
14. Miller’s sports programming included a radio broadcast of the 1925 World Series and the Tunney-Dempsey boxing rematch. Both events drew more than 10,000 people to the theatre as not everyone owned a radio.
15. N.D. Naman funded the first Houston Symphony concert with a \$1,000 grant and an additional \$800 of “free-will offerings” collected from the audience August 1941. That day the temperature reached 100 degrees. The audience was estimated at 15,000 by the time the concert began.

16. In 1943, the Summer Symphony Series launched and now the series is an annual Miller tradition.
17. "Miller's Hill" was created in 1948 with dirt from the excavations of Fannin Street. Throughout the years, an unspoken rule, which continues today, divided the seating—those who bring their lawn chairs on one side and those sitting on the ground, spreading out a blanket, on the other.
18. In August 1952, Hugo Koehn, the head of the city Parks and Recreation Department, reported that the city had somehow called Miller Memorial Theatre by the wrong name since its inception, so the venue was renamed Miller Outdoor Theatre.
19. In 1968, the City of Houston built a new theatre on the site of the original with bonds as voted by the public.
20. The current theatre building, designed by Eugene Werlin and Associates, won several awards: the American Iron and Steel Institute's Biannual Award (1969), the American Institute of Steel Construction's Award of Excellence, and the James E. Lincoln Arc Welding Foundation Award.
21. Miller's modern structure debuted on September 1, 1968, with a performance by 76 members of the Houston Symphony.
22. On September 15, Theatre Under The Stars presented its first ever musical, "Bells Are Ringing," kicking off the annual tradition of free musicals.
23. During the 1968 rebuild, large-scale orange and turquoise Tragedy and Comedy masks were added to the Miller façade. Reaction was mixed.
24. Orange plastic seats were attached upside down on the pitched roof giving the theater better acoustics and a fanciful appearance. The seats were removed when the sound system was upgraded in 1985.
25. The annual Fourth of July celebration is a signature event for the theater with music provided by the Houston Symphony and fireworks by Miller Theatre Advisory Board.
26. Houston City Council approved the Miller Theatre Advisory Board's help in performance selection and shared costs in June 1971.
27. Houston Shakespeare Festival was created in 1975 by Dr. Sydney Berger, then director of the School of Theater at the University of Houston and opened at Miller on Aug. 13, 1975 with A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Taming of the Shrew.
28. In 1978, the Cultural Arts Council of Houston, known today as Houston Arts Alliance, was created to allocate 1% of hotel/motel occupancy taxes for arts programming. MOT receives a 16.5% allocation.
29. The Miller stage has a 100-ton air conditioning system to help keep performers cool during Houston's hot and humid summers. Bonus - if you are seated in the front row aisles you stay chill as well.
30. The Miller orchestra pit by the 41-foot stage can be raised and lowered.

31. In 1996, Miller Outdoor Theatre was refurbished and expanded.
32. In 2008, a \$1.2 million improvement project increased accessibility for people with disabilities, added new walkways, improved sightlines, and provided more seating. The hill's seating area was elevated six feet.
33. In 2010, a new sound system at Miller improved clarity and fidelity.
34. In 2014, the peaked roof which leaked was fixed for \$4.7 million.
35. In 2017 in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, the 7 Downtown major performing arts organizations came together for the first time ever to lift up Houstonians with Houston Strong, honoring Houston's hometown heroes. The free event included performances by seven of the Theater District's resident companies: Alley Theatre, Da Camera of Houston, Houston Ballet, Houston Grand Opera, Houston Symphony, Performing Arts Houston and Theatre Under The Stars and was held on the Miller Outdoor Theatre stage.
36. Due to COVID-19 restrictions the 2020 Miller Outdoor Theatre season was cancelled but to keep the public engaged and provide work for artists in a safe environment, a black box studio was created on the fully enclosed stage, safety protocols were instituted, and 15 free and diverse performances from 12 organizations were livestreamed. 93,515 people logged on from Houston, throughout Texas, the US and internationally.
37. In 2021, 40 performances were presented via livestream at Miller and in 2022 there were 44 livestreams.
38. Miller Outdoor Theatre is located at 6000 Herman Park Drive, Houston, TX 77030 in Hermann Park.
39. Guests can bring their own beverages and food – but NO GLASS containers please. There's nothing like a picnic in the park before a show. Food service is also provided.
40. Park free at the central lot in front of the Houston Zoo near Miller, at McGovern Centennial Gardens, at the golf course clubhouse at the corner of Almeda and MacGregor.
41. Guests with disabilities can use the drop-off lane on Hermann Park Drive across from McGovern Centennial Gardens as well as limited handicap parking on the lot behind the theatre. See details here: https://www.milleroutdoortheatre.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/HermannParkParkingMap_withCentennialGardensandLotC.pdf
42. RideMetro to Miller. For details visit <https://www.ridemetro.org>.
43. Can't make it to Miller? Dream Stream! Visit <https://www.milleroutdoortheatre.com/miller-dream-streams/> and enjoy the performance at home.
44. 100th Anniversary Miller hoodies, tees, and coffee mugs are available here: <https://www.bonfire.com/miller-outdoor-theatres-100th-anniversary-2/>

Performers—just a few who have called Miller Outdoor Theatre home.

45. Saturday Night Live original cast with John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd, Jane Curtain, Laraine Newman, Garret Morris & Gilda Radner performed at Miller on August 3, 1976
46. In July 1979, the Houston Symphony welcomed Big Bird to Miller. Thousands attended.
47. Peter Frampton rocked the Miller stage with his The Art of Control Tour October 31, 1982.
48. First performed at Miller in 1983! Lauren Anderson.
The first Black principal dancer with Houston Ballet...a pair of her toe shoes are on display in the National African American Museum of History & Culture at the Smithsonian.
49. Tejano superstar Selena performed with her band Los Dinos at Miller when she was 16 years old in 1987.
50. It's Tuna Time. In 2005 the first MTAB presented show was Joe Sears & Jaston Williams' hilarious "GREATER TUNA."
51. Classic Albums Live has been part of Miller's "Presented Series" every year since 2010, performing great classic rock albums, note for note, cut for cut.
52. Still twistin! Chubby Checker showed his legendary moves in 2012, 2015 and 2018.
53. Broadway legend Tommy Tune, a 10-time Tony Award winner and native Texan performed at Miller in 2016.
54. Grammy-award winning Houston Chamber Choir performed their program "This Land is Your Land" in 2022 and "Jukebox Saturday Night" in 2019.
55. Little Joe Y La Familia, one of the most popular Tejano fusion bands in the country and winner of five Grammy Awards for their music, are frequent and immensely popular performers at Miller during the annual Festival Chicano.
56. Houston's own Christina Wells headlined Miller in 2021.
57. Pakistani singer Arroj Aftab, winner of a Grammy award for "Best World Performance" was presented by Asia Society Texas at Miller in 2022.
58. Frankie Avalon, a teen idol in the 1950s, has enjoyed a sensational career in music, TV, and films. Now in his early 80s, Avalon brought his harmonies to the Miller stage in 2022.
59. Performers from around the world like: Ballet Folklorico de Mexico de Amalia Hernandez, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Soweto Gospel Choir (South Africa), Golden Dragon Acrobats, GuGu Drum Group from Shanghai, Ladysmith Black Mambazo (South Africa) and The Royal Drummers of Burundi have showcased their international talents at Miller.
60. America headlined Miller in April 2022.

61. Gone but not forgotten. The six-time Grammy Award-winning musician and Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee, Dr. John performed his famous song “Right Place, Wrong Time” at Miller.
62. Other notable rockers include WAR, Mary Wilson (The Supremes) & Freda Payne, The Spencer Davis Group, and Darlene Love.
63. The list goes on... Dave Mason, Rare Earth, Steppenwolf, Buck Owens, Randy Travis, Dwight Yoakum, John Lee Hooker, Conway Twitty, Doug Supernaw, The Mavericks, Little Joe, Ramon Ayala, Ramon Herrera, La Sombra, La Fiebre, Matisyahu, Bobby “Blue” Bland, Con Funk Shun, Cameo, Ronnie Laws, Doctor John, Esperanza Spalding, The Flat Landers, Casper Rawls, Doyle Bramhall all graced the Miller Outdoor Theatre stage.
64. The Annual Houston Shakespeare Festival celebrates 49 years of performances at Miller in 2023.
65. The 2023 season opens with the Trinity Irish Dance Company on March 17 at 8 p.m.

Art in the Park

66. Mecom Rockwell Colonnade is made from the Doric columns saved from the original Miller Outdoor Theatre.
67. At the top of the Miller hill sits Atropos Key by Houstonian Hannah H. Stewart. Atropos is the Greek Goddess of Fate, the cutter of the thread of life. 1972.
68. The Oliver Twist bronze sculpture situated outside the performer’s entrance at the theater was created by Texas sculptor Trace Guthrie in 1976.

Info:

There’s something for everyone on stage at Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park. From daytime programs especially for young children to family friendly evening performances of music, dance, theatre and more, this is Houston’s best entertainment value. Admission is FREE!

For a complete schedule, visit www.milleroutdoortheatre.com.

Tickets can be obtained online from the Miller website one day prior to a performance, starting at 10:00 a.m. through noon on the day of a performance. The theatre reserves a limited number of tickets for the Box Office which opens an hour before the show starts. For help with handicap accessible seating, call the box office in advance at 832-487-7123. As always, seating is open on the hill.

Download press materials:

<https://www.milleroutdoortheatre.com/portfolio/>

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