

Honoring creative freedom

Service marks Rushdie edict

By EMILY J. HORNADAY
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TRENTON — The smooth, mellow tones of a live jazz band filled St. Andrew's Episcopal Church yesterday during a special Mass honoring the works of all artists on the third anniversary of Salman Rushdie's death sentence.

The service underscored the importance of creative freedom and was conducted by members of the Community of Julian of Norwich.

"Give thanks for God's passion within you — for romance, art, a longing for the Holy City. And give thanks for those who are with you on the dance floor," read a portion of a service prayer.

Three years ago, Iran imposed a death sentence for British author Rushdie. His novel "Satanic Verses" was declared blasphemous in 1989 by Iranian fundamentalist Moslems.

Yesterday, St. Andrew's pastor, the Rev. Bob Gallagher, said, "In this Eucharist we affirm God's action in the passion that draws us toward each other in romantic love and affection; that results in art; that dreams of a better city and world."

In describing the service, the program quoted jazz master Duke Ellington, who wrote, "Love is supreme and unconditional, like is nice but limited."

Participating in the service were members of the jazz band The Philly Connection including leader Bill Lacy, trumpet; Al Jackson, drums; Jim Ridl, piano; and Paul Kleinfelder, bass.

VERONICA BRADY, artistic director of the Passage Theatre, spoke about artistic censorship; and Tricia Fagan, Trenton Avant-



Staff photos by Ken Wajda

Bill Lacy leads The Philly Connection in a tribute to creative freedom at St. Andrew's in Trenton.

Garde Festival organizer and poet, read selections of works.

On Feb. 14, 1989, Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a "fatwa," or religious edict, demanding Rushdie's death. Since that time, Rushdie has lived in hiding, guarded by British police, and has moved from one residence to another almost constantly.

On Friday, Rushdie said from London that his supporters have met with Iranian diplomats for the first time in an attempt to lift the death sentence.

"Even though the Iranians said the 'fatwa' could not be withdrawn, the fact that they agreed to see us was hopeful," Rushdie said.

In a 15-minute speech to about 300 writers and civil rights campaigners, Rushdie said he was a victim of "religious terrorism."

"I refuse to be an unperson. I refuse to forgo the right to publish my work. I have lost my freedom, my home, my family, my daily life and I want them back," he said.



Veronica Brady, artistic director of Passage Theatre, speaks about censorship at yesterday's service in St. Andrew's Church.