



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### SHAY WAFER APPOINTED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF 651 ARTS

**New York, NY, July 21, 2011** — 651 ARTS is pleased to announce that Shay Wafer has been appointed Executive Director. Ms. Wafer will be the fourth woman to lead 651 ARTS, now entering its 23<sup>rd</sup> year, and succeeds Georgiana Pickett who steps down in mid-August.

Wafer's appointment comes at a critical time for 651, as the organization is launching a planning and fundraising effort to relocate to a new home outside of the BAM Harvey Theater. While undertaking this next step in the organization's history, 651 will continue to present live performing arts events born of the African Diaspora in venues in Ft. Greene and Downtown Brooklyn along with conducting education, international exchange and artist development programs focused on artists of African descent.

651 ARTS Board Chairwoman, Valencia Yearwood, says about Ms. Wafer's appointment: "Shay thoroughly impressed the search committee with her lifetime of stalwart dedication to the arts and community development. Her passionate vision is beautifully balanced with pragmatic experience – she has all of the elements needed to lead 651's administration, artistic programs, community engagement and strategic planning."

Ms. Wafer adds, "As a conveyor of contemporary performing arts created by artists of African descent, 651 ARTS has been an innovator and notable leader in the field. I am honored to have the opportunity to serve as the next Executive Director and to build upon the extraordinary legacy of my predecessor. 651 ARTS is the ideal organization to further my dedication to artist development, audience engagement, and using the arts to empower communities."

Ms. Wafer has held senior level positions at a number of non-profit arts organizations with a focus on African-American programming, community engagement and arts education. In 2007 Ms. Wafer became the founding Vice President of Programs for the August Wilson Center for African American Culture, a new multi-disciplinary performing arts center and museum in downtown Pittsburgh. Prior to the August Wilson Center, Wafer served for six years as the managing director of Cornerstone Theater Company in Los Angeles, California- her hometown. She also served as the Managing Director of the St. Louis Black Repertory Company and was a founding partner of Crossroads Arts Academy and Theatre in L.A. and was a co-founder of Colored Girl Productions. Ms. Wafer has engaged in additional community and volunteer activities throughout her career including serving on the Board of Directors of Theatre Communications Group (TCG). Ms. Wafer is a graduate of Howard University and Yale School of Drama.

It is the mission of 651 ARTS to deepen awareness of and appreciation for contemporary performing arts and culture of the African Diaspora, and to provide professional and creative opportunities for performing artists of African descent.

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