



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**651 ARTS Announces 2022 Season with**

**FOREWORD, FORWARD: A Bridge Season**

**As the Institution Prepares Move into its First Permanent Home in  
its over 30 year History**

**Season Highlights to Include:**

**The BOLD, The BRAVE, The RISK-TAKER: The THEATER-  
MAKER Featuring Rhodessa Jones**

**Virtual Griot: Brooklyn Featuring NSangou Njikam**

**The Soulfolk Experience: From Brooklyn Moon with Love**

**The Return of The Woodshed Network in Partnership  
With Jazz Icon Dee Dee Bridgewater**

**651 ARTS Second Annual Juneteenth Celebration**

(BROOKLYN, NY – December 9, 2021)– 651 ARTS, Brooklyn’s premier institution for the African Diasporic performing arts, today unveiled plans for its 2022 season with ***FOREWORD, FORWARD: A Bridge Season***. Consisting of a slate of exciting, new programs featuring a mix of original virtual works, in-person presentations and unique collaborations with world class artists, *FOREWORD, FORWARD* will act as an artistic conduit for the venerable institution in preparation for the opening of its first-ever permanent home located in the heart of downtown Brooklyn scheduled for Fall, 2022. With the country continuing to rebound from and navigate through the global pandemic, 651’s upcoming season was also curated to represent and reflect “a time of great transformation,” centering around themes of progress, legacy and what it means to embrace change.

Set to launch during Black History Month, 651’s ***FOREWORD, FORWARD: A Bridge Season*** will kick-off with the first presentation from its Digital Suite with ***The BOLD, The BRAVE, The RISK-TAKER: The THEATER-MAKER*** (February 19), a compelling panel discussion series

about risk, self-determination, progress in theatre-making and generative theater to include a conversation with legendary award-winning theater artist **Rhodessa Jones** and actor and playwright **NSangou Njikam**. In March, the institution will present the world premiere of ***Virtual Griot: Brooklyn*** (March 17), an original eight-episode digital series showcasing performing artists as the Griots of their respective neighborhoods with the first episode featuring NSangou Njikam.

For this season's in-person offerings, 651 will debut the **Curator's Corner Live** (March 31) featuring a diverse array of Black curators in dance and performance. *FOREWORD, FORWARD* will culminate with the return of 651's annual ***Juneteenth Celebration*** to be held over the course of the weekend commemorating Juneteenth (June 17-19). Also as part of its Juneteenth Celebration and under its Digital Suite arm, the institution will present ***The Soulfolk Experience: From Brooklyn Moon with Love*** (June 17-19), a film chronicling a reunion held at the Fort Greene mainstay in an ode to Black Brooklyn and heralding a time when Black-owned businesses populated Fulton Street.

Additionally, 651 will host two major convenings during the Season for professionals in the arts including the ***Black Dance Convening: Part 1, Curators*** which will virtually gather several stakeholders from the dance community to discuss contemporary and emergent dance practices. Jazz icon **Dee Dee Bridgewater** will once again partner with 651 to present ***The Woodshed Network*** - now in its third year and conceived by Bridgewater as a mentorship and career accelerator program for emerging women artists in Jazz.

“Our FOREWORD, FORWARD Season represents an extension of our 30-plus year legacy and is ‘sneak-peak’ view for 651 programming in our future home in Downtown Brooklyn. While crafting FOREWORD - a mix of intimately curated convenings that we see as an introduction to our way FORWARD - we make progress and we progress. We harvest from seeds planted and nurtured over thirty years ago when this institution was founded and we are gathering our 651 ARTS community to spark ideas, align intentions and to refine our movement,” said **Monica L. Williams**, Chief Curator and Director of Programs for 651 ARTS. “As we cross-over from the pandemics into this new season, we lean on our community knowledge for inspiration. Inspired by historical Black Gatherings of salons during the Harlem Renaissance; Black migration pattern depicted in Jacob Lawrence’s paintings; all-Black, only-Black artist groups from the Black Arts Movement and the iconic ‘Breakbeat’ of Hip Hop, we are intentionally curating Black space as home filled with the nuances of Black life, emergent Black performance, and the each one, teach one philosophy of Black culture. I am excited that our audiences will be able to go along with us on this journey and have the opportunity to experience our vision for the future of this institution.

651 ARTS’ new home is located at 10 Lafayette Avenue in Downtown Brooklyn and will be comprised of 12,500 square feet of office, rehearsal and production space. The institution is scheduled to move into the building in Fall, 2022.

## **651 ARTS' FOREWORD, FORWARD: A BRIDGE SEASON - HIGHLIGHTS**

### **651 ARTS DIGITAL SUITE**

#### **The BOLD, The BRAVE, The RISK-TAKER: The THEATER-MAKER**

*Date(s):* February 19, 2022; 7:00 pm

*Location:* Online

As part of its Residency Program, 651 ARTS gathers its resident artist cohort - **Eric Lockley**, **April Matthis**, and **Goldie Patrick** - and their collaborators to discuss their unique careers and art-making practices while defining generative theater and presentation within Black spaces in conversation with 651 ARTS staff for a three-day convening. The artist cohort are provided resources towards the creation of a new work-in-progress to be presented in Fall 2022 and a 'white paper' defining 'generative theater' will be developed and shared with the field. The convening will be followed by the first panel discussion part of *The BOLD, The BRAVE, The RISK-TAKER: The THEATER-MAKER* Series about risk, self-determination, and progress featuring multi-award-winning legendary theater artist, **Rhodesa Jones** in conversation with 651's Chief Curator and Director of Programs **Monica L. Williams** and playwright/performer, **NSangou Njikam**.

#### **Virtual Griot: Brooklyn**

*Date(s):* Premieres March 7, 2022 – April 25, 2022; Weekly on Mondays; 7:00 pm

*Location:* Online

651 ARTS premieres VIRTUAL GRIOT, an original digital series featuring performing artists in the role of Griots as they deliver powerful messages from their neighbors to the people in their neighborhoods. Produced by 651 ARTS, the series premieres on MLK Day and will include eight episodes and embodying African Diasporic storytelling tradition, old and new. The pilot will be based in Brooklyn and follows Maurice Francis Wood aka MF Wood who upon seeing his neighborhood go through gentrification, decides to take action with rather unusual and sometimes extreme methods to save his beloved community in the hopes to inspire others to take bigger steps in making their lives and homes better. Featuring playwright and actor **NSangou Njikam** as *M.F. Wood*.

#### **The Soulfolk Experience: From Brooklyn Moon with Love**

*Date(s):* June 17- 19, 2022; 7:00 pm

*Location:* Online

As part of its Juneteenth Celebration, 651 ARTS presents *The Soulfolk Experience: From Brooklyn Moon with Love* originally filmed by Ubiquita Worldwide in June, 2021 at the Fort Greene-based restaurant. This documentary takes an intimate look at Black people gathering during New York City's first official Juneteenth Celebration with a front row seat to The Soulfolk Experience 'reunion' performance.' The show is a nod to a time when Black owned businesses populated Fulton Street, neighbors gathered for culture and creative expression flowed down the block. Featuring **Kimberly Knox**, founder of Ubiquita Worldwide and **Michael Thompson**, founder of Brooklyn Moon.

## **651 ARTS LIVE PRESENTATIONS**

### **Curator's Corner Live**

*Date(s):* March 31, 2022; 7:00 pm

*Location:* The Center for Fiction - 15 Lafayette Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11217

A discussion series featuring African Diasporic curators in conversation about the field, their practice and the future of contemporary Black performance

### **Second Annual Juneteenth Celebration**

*Date(s):* June 17-19, 2022

*Location:* The Plaza at 300 Ashland Place, Brooklyn, NY 11217

651 ARTS presents the **651 ARTS' Second Annual Juneteenth Celebration**, an annual commemoration of African-American emancipation featuring a weekend of performances and activities. The Celebration will span over the course of three days and will be held outdoors at the institution's future home. This event is free and open to the public. Registration is required.

## **651 ARTS HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION CONVENINGS**

### **The Woodshed Network**

*Date(s):* February 21 – March 4, 2022

Now in its third year, The Woodshed Network led by Jazz icon **Dee Dee Bridgewater** and **Tulani Bridgewater-Kolwaski** was conceived by Bridgewater as a mentorship and career accelerator program for emerging women artists in Jazz to include professional career development sessions and networking.

### **Black Dance Convening: Part 1, Curators**

*Date(s):* April, 2022

651 ARTS hosts luminaries from the global Black Dance community for a three-part convening to extend and expand the legacy of presenting Black Dance at 651 ARTS. Part One gathers curators of Black contemporary dance who will discuss contemporary and emergent dance practices and co-curate the next two sessions to be held at 651's new home in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023.

### **About 651 ARTS**

Founded in Brooklyn, NY in 1988, the mission of 651 ARTS is to deepen awareness of and appreciation of contemporary performing arts and culture of the African Diaspora, and to provide professional and creative opportunities for artists of African descent.

651's signature programs have featured pioneering black choreographers from around the world including Germaine Acogny, Nora Chipaumire, Carmen de Lavallade, Diane McIntyre, Bebe Miller, Abdel R. Salaam and Jawole Willo Jo Zollar. As part of its commitment to the furtherance of conversations and celebration of Diaspora music, the institution has presented dialogues and performances by Somi, Hugh Masekela, and Grammy-winning artist Betty Carter, to name a few. Theatrical and text-based works by Anna Deavere Smith, Sekou Sundiata, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Ntozake Shange, Okwui Okpokwasili and Maria Bauman are representative of the hundreds of artists and productions featuring solo creations, collaborations, emerging artists, and works-in-development all produced by 651's visionary leadership in the field of Black performance.

*651 ARTS' programs are made possible by gifts from generous individuals and grants from Bay and Paul Foundations, The Baisley Powell Elebash Fund, The Black Seed, Con Edison, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Ford Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Lambent Foundation, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, New York Community Trust, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Emma Sheafer Charitable Trust, Wallace Foundation, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, including Majority Leader Laurie A. Cumbo, the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature.*

###