



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**651 ARTS Presents the  
First Performance of its 2022 Season with  
Malik Work's Acclaimed Piece  
*Verses at Work***

**Three Performances:  
Saturday, November 19, 7PM  
- Sunday, November 20, 2PM & 6PM  
@ Mark O'Donnell Theater in Downtown Brooklyn**

***651 Also Announced the Return of The Woodshed Network  
Its Collaboration with Jazz legend Dee Dee Bridgewater***

***The mentorship and career accelerator program for women artists in Jazz is  
currently accepting applications for its 2023 cohort.***

(**Brooklyn, NY** – November 8, 2022) – 651 ARTS, Brooklyn's premier institution for the African Diasporic performing arts, presents the first performance as part of its 2022 Season - **Liminal Spaces: Homebound** - with **Malik Work's** award-winning *Verses at Work*. To be held over the course of a weekend (Nov. 19-20) at the Mark O' Donnell Theater in Downtown Brooklyn, *Verses at Work* is a vibrant and compelling performance piece written and performed by the dynamic actor/MC exploring the concepts of identity, masculinity, perseverance, and love through the telling of his own story as an artist struggling to survive in New York City.

Coined by South African press as "the griot from New York and Shakespeare of the streets," Malik Work masterfully weaves verse, spoken word, monologue, hip hop, and documentary in this immersive hip-hop theater piece to bring to life this narrative about the birth of the music scene in the East Village. Issues of love, race, money, class and struggle all intertwine for an experience that is true to the name of the band they formed - The Real Live Show. *Verses at Work* primarily explores the nuances of Black masculinity with Work realizing that he must reconcile the expectations of the world with the expectations he has for himself. Additionally, the work poses questions about the insidious role institutionalized racism plays in the trajectory of a life, the struggle of the developing artist in cities all over the world especially the United States

and how one survives while staying creatively sharp and available for preferred artistic opportunities.

Throughout the piece, the audience is also taken back to a different New York City. Gentrification is just beginning to impact historically underserved communities. Hip Hop music and culture is reflecting the city's changing landscape. Just 'pre' and 'post' 9/11, New York is the epicenter of urban renewal. New nightclubs are opening up, as old ones are closing down. The city's nightlife is vibrant and fluid. In this distinctly original format, Work's verses testify to and narrate a quite remarkable tale: the transformation and evolution of the City, hip hop and himself.

"651 ARTS is thrilled to present *Verses at Work* as part of our season and I couldn't think of a better first performance for our new Season. It is such a powerful piece from such a dynamic artist," said **Toya Lillard**, 651's new Executive Director. "At the core of our mission and DNA is always the artist and true creatives such as Malik Work will always have a home at 651. As we journey toward moving into our first-ever permanent home in the Spring, *Verses at Work* is the embodiment of this period of transition and transformation for 651. I'm so excited to see the response to the piece!"

*Verses at Work* is written and performed by Malik Work and directed by **Vernice Miller** with **Quincy Valentine** presiding as Musical Director. The piece also includes featured performances from **Stix Bones** and **Ayanna Williams**. The weekend will consist of three performances - Saturday November 19<sup>th</sup> at 7pm and Sunday, November 20<sup>th</sup> at 2pm with a final showing at 6pm.

Additionally, 651 also announced that **The Woodshed Network (TWN)** - a mentorship and career accelerator program for early professional women artists in Jazz - is currently accepting applications for its 2023 cohort. Now going into its fourth year, TWN was conceived by Jazz icon **Dee Dee Bridgewater** and is a collaboration between 651 ARTS, Dee Dee Bridgewater, DDB Productions, and Bridgewater Artists Management.

With part-funding through the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, TWN provides professional career development through networking, mentorship, knowledge-sharing and community-building. Tailored in both focus and leadership, TWN traverses the spectrum of artists' on and off-stage lives covering topics ranging from career-mapping to publicity to management, all in tandem with physical and mental wellness. Applications for The Woodshed Network are available via <https://www.651arts.org/the-woodshed-network/>

As part of its new season, 651 also recently launched the **Home Warming Initiative** as it prepares the move into the institution's first-ever rooted space at 10 Lafayette in Downtown Brooklyn in Spring, 2023. Marking a watershed moment in the institution's history, the new 12,500 sq ft., multipurpose facility at 10 Lafayette will deepen 651's programming and gather the multiple communities it serves in ways never before possible.

With the recent appointment of Lillard and on the threshold of moving into its first permanent home, 651 ARTS' upcoming season signals a new era for the legacy organization as well as a major step in its continued growth and expansion. Since its inception in 1988, 651 ARTS has

navigated both literal and figurative liminal spaces and is now - with the move - homebound. This “**Liminal Spaces: Homebound**” season offers an opportunity to think, individually and collectively, about “*how we will show up in the future that we imagine.*” 651’s new season will allow the institution to expand its artistic footprint and to further develop partnerships and collaborations with artists and other arts organizations.

Tickets to *Verses at Work* are \$15.00. For more information on 651 ARTS and its programs, please visit: [www.651arts.org](http://www.651arts.org)

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### **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 Somiahsg, 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.

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