



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**651 ARTS in Partnership  
with The Billie Holiday Theatre Presents**

***Song Salon***

**A New Series Celebrating the Concept of the ‘Salon’ and Centering  
Artists and Artistic Expression**

***The Inaugural Season of the Series Will Feature A Collective of  
Dynamic, Rising Artists Including:  
Jordyn Davis, Terron Austin, Candice Hoyes and Nicholas Ryan Gant***

***Collaboration Marks Deepened Partnership Between the Two  
Brooklyn-based Institutions***

**Every Thursday in May  
At The Billie Holiday Theatre in Brooklyn**

(Brooklyn, NY – April 14, 2023) - **651 ARTS** - Brooklyn’s premier institution for the African Diasporic performing arts- in partnership with **The Billie Holiday Theatre (The Billie)** - one of the nation’s preeminent arts and culture organizations – will present a new innovative live performance series this Spring with the ***Song Salon***. Although they have collaborated in the past, this new series is a major programming initiative for both 651 and The Billie and marks a deepened partnership between the two legacy institutions. Centering artists and their work in intimate conversations and providing a space for connection, growth and discovery, the ***Song Salon*** will take place every Thursday in May on The Billie’s iconic stage with each week spotlighting a different artist and focus.

Conceptually, the ***Song Salon*** draws inspiration from the historical importance of the “salon” to Black creativity and expression. Salons in the tradition of the French literary and philosophical

movements of the 17th and 18th centuries were carried on through the 1920s in urban settings. Most notably, arts patron A'Lelia Walker - daughter of America's first self-made female millionaire Madame C.J. Walker - hosted salons at her home in Harlem attended by the writers, poets, artists, musicians and activists who defined the Harlem Renaissance. Since that time, salons have served as safe spaces where Black artists, thinkers and creators gather to discuss and express themselves.

Steeped in that legacy, the *Song Salon* was designed to be a supportive space and community for creatives to try new things, revisit old things, or simply to talk through things and to further connect with audiences on a more intimate and personal level. Each Thursday, an artist is invited to share their performance, process (or plight) in front of a small audience. This inaugural season of the series will feature a collective of dynamic, emerging artists on-the-rise including: **Jordyn Davis** (5/4), **Terron Austin** (5/11), **Candice Hoyes** (5/18) and **Nicholas Ryan Gant** (5/25).

“We are so excited to partner with The Billie on the inaugural *Song Salon* series. As two Brooklyn-based institutions - which both represent legacy and share so many synergies - this collaboration is an amazing opportunity for us to use our collective power to advance and amplify Black artistic voices and stories,” said 651’s Executive Director, **Toya Lillard**.” With the series, we wanted to invoke the salons of the Harlem renaissance - having a safe space for real and meaningful conversation and connection between artists and audience. Ultimately, we want *Song Salon* to be THE place that gives artist the springboard to do what they do best-create.”

“As we continue to celebrate The Billie’s 50th Anniversary Season, we are thrilled to partner with a wonderful institution that embodies innovation. 651 ARTS’ programming is closely aligned with our mission to tell our stories, support artists across the Diaspora and provide a space for Black creativity and expression to flourish,” said **Blondel A. Pinnock, President & CEO, Restoration**. “For both of our institutions, this collaboration is an exciting opportunity to extend our reach throughout the greater Brooklyn area and to further establish our commitment to our community.”

The *Song Salon* series reinforces 651’s mission to nurture and support Black artists and their works and is a primary part of the organization’s current season - “Liminal Spaces: Homebound.” Centered around the concept of liminal spaces (a metaphorical, physical or emotional place a person is in during a transitional period), this season's programming explores how these spaces have historically acted as a conduit to imagine and create more sustainable futures for Black people worldwide and offers an opportunity to think - individually and collectively - about “*how we will show up in the future that we imagine.*” Additionally, this season will mark two especially important milestones for 651 with the institution celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year and preparing for the grand opening of its first-ever permanent home located in the heart of downtown Brooklyn in late Spring/Early Summer 2023.

This event and collaboration are also a part of The Billie’s 50th Anniversary Season which sees the historic institution paying homage to five decades of excellence on its stage while also spotlighting the institution’s future. The Billie kicked off its Anniversary Season in February with a special exhibition and conversation event celebrating the launch of the limited edition

book “Our Open Casket to the World” - a 200-page hardcover publication capturing the making of NYC’s first Black Lives Matter Mural in Bed-Stuy which The Billie co-organized. Most recently, The Billie hosted a conversation with Emmy-winning actress Sheryl Lee Ralph and was awarded the National Medal of the Arts by the National Endowment of the Arts and the Biden Administration last month.

## **SONG SALON 2023 SCHEDULE & ARTISTS**

***Date:*** May 4<sup>th</sup>

***Artist:*** Jordyn Davis

Award winning bassist, composer, songwriter, vocalist, and multi-instrumentalist Jordyn Davis became the first African-American woman to receive a Bachelor's Degree in Music Composition from Michigan State University in 2019 as well as the first Michigan State student to receive a Bachelor's Degree in Music Composition and Jazz Studies concurrently. She has also performed and worked with artists such as Micheal Dease, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Wycliffe Gordon & The Black Excellence Dee Dee Bridgewater, Craig Harris & William Delisfort. Additionally, she is the proud leader of her own band “Composetheway.” The Brooklyn-based artist was recently featured on the PBS Limited Series “Music for Social Justice” and is an alumnae of The Woodshed Network - a mentorship and career accelerator program for emerging self-identifying women artists in Jazz presented by 651 ARTS in collaboration with music legend Dee Dee Bridgewater. Davis is also one of two inaugural Jazz Leader Fellowship recipients from the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music as well as a teaching artist for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

***Date:*** May 11<sup>th</sup>

***Artist:*** Terron Austin

Brooklyn-based singer/songwriter Terron Austin has spent the past eight years writing, recording & lending supporting vocals in studios & on stages across the globe serving a plethora of world-renowned artists such as TLC, Teedra Moses, B. Slade, Shanice and Durand Bernarr. Austin can also currently be seen touring internationally with the illustrious “Queen of Neo-Soul,” four-time Grammy Award-winner Erykah Badu. With his eyes set on making his own impact on the world of music & the entertainment industry at large, he most recently made his solo debut with a prominent feature on summer 2022’s “B-Boy Blues” Original Motion Picture Soundtrack now streaming on BET+. In 2022, TERRON also garnered the lead single & title cut from the global artists compilation project “Lovers Lane,” which landed in the Top 10 Best R&B Albums lineup in Croatia, with additional major support in London, Amsterdam & Brazil.

***Date:*** May 18<sup>th</sup>

***Artist:*** Candice Hoyes

Recently featured in Carnegie Hall's 2022 Timeline of African American Music, Candice Hoyes is an artist of "chill-inducing range" (Vogue) across genre, medium and style. The prolific singer, producer, songwriter, filmmaker and archivist has been dubbed “an artist with the most eclectic and delicious voice ever” by JazzFM(UK) using her music to bring “Black history into the present” (NPR). Hoyes’ recent works include Carnegie Hall, Detroit Symphony, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Caramoor, NYC JazzFest, Blue Note, and collaborations with Chaka Khan, Lalah Hathaway and Lin-Manuel Miranda. As an activist, she was commissioned by Michelle Obama's When We All Vote and National Black Theater to create performance art to mobilize Black

voters. A Harvard, Columbia Law and TED alum, Hoyes is also an alumnae of The Woodshed Network. She is set to release her experimental jazz album, Nite Bjudi (pronounced night beauty) in Summer 2023, and the first single is out now.

**Date: May 25<sup>th</sup>**

**Artist: Nicholas Ryan Gant**

Nicholas Ryan Gant (NRG) is a New York-based artist and educator from Phoenix, Arizona. NRG studied classical vocal performance at Howard University in Washington, D.C., holds a Master of Art in Music Education from Hunter College, was a participant in The Lincoln Center Scholars program, and is a recipient of the 2020 Paul Simon Music Fellowship. In addition to the classroom, NRG is also an accomplished vocal coach for several artists and record labels as well as a sought-after workshop and masterclass facilitator. NRG is the vice-president of the board of directors for Decolonizing the Music Room. As a vocal composer, NRG has collaborated with choreographers Malik Washington, Francine E. Ott and Kyle Abraham. He's been a featured vocalist on several projects internationally and has recorded seven independent projects of his own. NRG has also had the opportunity to sing support vocals for artists such as Michael McDonald, Mariah Carey, Jon Batiste, Miri Ben-Ari, Zo!, Carmen Rodgers, Sy Smith, Run the Jewels, and Childish Gambino.

To purchase tickets for events under the *Song Salon* series, please click [HERE](#)

For additional information on 651 ARTS, please visit: [651ARTS.org](https://651ARTS.org). For exclusive photos, updates and more, follow us on social: [@651ARTS](#)

For more information on The Billie Holiday Theatre, please visit [TheBillieHoliday.org](https://TheBillieHoliday.org). For exclusive photos, updates and more follow us on Instagram: [@theBillieHolidayTheatre](#)

### **About 651 ARTS**

Since its founding in 1988, 651 ARTS has become a trusted convener of contemporary African Diasporic artistic expression, a champion and nurturer for emerging artists and their work and a vital cultural resource for its surrounding community. As it moves forward, part of 651 ARTS' mission is to preserve the legacy of Black culture in Brooklyn, celebrate the eclecticism of Black performance and to pioneer new visions of African Diaspora artists. This year – the transition year – is integral for the institution as it continues to lay the framework that will further help to reinforce 651 ARTS' role as a leader of African Diasporic culture while also establishing it an incubator for artistic innovation in the 21st century.

*Major support for the 651 ARTS Song Salon was provided by the Baisley Powell Elebash Fund.*

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### **About The Billie Holiday Theatre**

The AUDELCO and Obie Award-winning Billie Holiday Theatre is artistic anchor to the largest African American community in the nation: Central Brooklyn and one of the last remaining theaters forged in the aesthetic and sociocultural kiln of America's Civil Rights/Black Arts Movements. Founded in May 1972, The Billie Holiday Theatre is a beacon for world class art rooted in racial justice in the heart of Bed-Stuy: producing, presenting, and commissioning new and classic works and festivals in theater, dance, music, visual arts, and film; providing artistic and institutional residencies; and serving ages 3 to 103 with educational programming. For bold and daring artists and audiences from around the corner and around the world who look to The Billie as a rigorous artistic space that tackles racial injustices, presents new and unapologetic voices, and imagines a world where all people can flourish...welcome home.

*Lead support for the 2023- 2024 season is provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Ford Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, The J.L. Greene Art Access Fund, The Kresge Foundation, The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, Mosaic Network and Fund in the New York Community Trust, The New York Community Trust and The Seller-Lehrer Family Foundation.*

*Our ability to tell stories that matter in the epicenter of the largest community of people of African descent in the nation is made possible with support from our partners: A.R.T. New York, Altman Foundation, Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Booth Ferris Foundation, Con Edison, The Cowles Charitable Trust, The Fund for the City of New York, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, Harkness Foundation for Dance, The Hyde and Watson Foundation, The Jordan Brand, Lucille Lortel Foundation, Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, Tiger Baron Foundation, Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, Universal Music Group's Task Force for Meaningful Change and William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust.*

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