



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**651 ARTS in Partnership with Downtown Brooklyn Partnership
Hosts Its Third Annual Juneteenth Celebration in Collaboration
with
The Soapbox Presents**

“We Outside! A Brooklyn Juneteenth”

Celebration will Mark The Soapbox Presents’ Return to Brooklyn

**The Plaza at 300 Ashland in Downtown Brooklyn
Saturday, June 17, 2023
12 PM - 8 PM**

(Brooklyn, NY – May 16, 2023) – For its Third Annual Juneteenth Celebration, **651 ARTS** - Brooklyn’s premier institution for the African Diasporic performing arts - in partnership with **Downtown Brooklyn Partnership** (DBP) will join forces with the popular outdoor music concert series **The Soapbox Presents** to commemorate the now federally-recognized holiday with **“We Outside! A Brooklyn Juneteenth.”** With support from Two Trees Management, this year’s celebration will include a day of performances and activities and will be held outdoors on The Plaza at 300 Ashland Place in Downtown Brooklyn, on Saturday, June 17th from 12 PM – 8 PM. The partnership marks The Soapbox Presents’ first major presentation in Brooklyn since the pandemic.

Curated by The Soapbox Presents as part of their Juneteenth activations happening in both Brooklyn and Harlem over the course of the weekend, “We Outside! A Brooklyn Juneteenth” will celebrate Black cultural traditions that were developed in this country. The program for the day will include: “Young, Gifted, and Black: A Tribute to HBCU Culture,” a special segment set to feature a battle of the bands and a stroll off with members of the Divine 9 Black fraternities and sororities, helmed by **Mahogany L. Browne**; “Melanated Notes” spotlighting spoken word and performed by local poets; and, of course, a “Stoop Session” music concert featuring a 10-piece band led by singers **J. Hoard** and **Ekep Nkwelle**. “We Outside!” will also present activities for the entire family including a Kidz Korner performance activation with ventriloquists, a tap dance workshop, a Double Dutch exhibition and workshop as well as other

offerings. Additionally, Brooklyn Pop-up will curate a marketplace experience for the day comprised of Black-owned businesses and Black vendors and artisans. The event will culminate with a dance party on The Plaza.

Launched in the summer of 2020 during lockdown in response to the murder of George Floyd and as a community first performance initiative that toured the boroughs, The Soapbox Presents was established as a platform - literally and figuratively - for Black and Brown expression. Founded by arts curator **Marija Abney**, the organization aims to create a space for marginalized communities to gather, to resist, and to celebrate the brilliance of Black and Brown people through music and the arts. Continuing the tradition of soapbox oration when the preacher or townsman would take to his soapbox to speak to the people, The Soapbox Presents most often happens outside as a modern day iteration of town squares where there is the opportunity to both curate an audience and to gather a crowd organically. Each activation features artists that are local to that specific New York City borough and spotlights the culture of that area in atypical street spaces. Since its inception, The Soapbox Presents has produced over 32 activations and featured more than 150 artists.

“Since 2021, we have been active primarily in Harlem, NY, producing free music, dance, and spoken word events that center Black and brown communities and Black and brown artists. For the first time since the pandemic - thanks to 651 ARTS - we are returning to Brooklyn, adding to our weekend of festivities celebrating freedom, community, and the cultural contributions of Black Americans. We, at The Soapbox Presents, believe in building coalitions that build communities,” said Abney. “651 ARTS’ commitment to the African diasporic performing arts and artists is unmatched in the Brooklyn community, making them the perfect partners for The Soapbox Presents. We are looking forward to celebrating and manifesting freedom in the plaza with “We Outside! A Brooklyn Juneteenth.”

“We are so excited to expand our Juneteenth programming this year with this very special collaboration with The Soapbox Presents. We are now in our third year of doing this event and I know this will be our biggest year yet,” said 651 ARTS’ Executive Director **Toya Lillard**. “It is not only an opportunity to commemorate freedom and liberation but also to celebrate the resilience and perseverance of our people as well as our immense contributions to this country through the power of music and communing. With our Juneteenth Celebration, I believe we are building a new tradition in Brooklyn – one that reinforces our commitment to amplifying Black voices and to building up our community. This year’s event will also mark a housewarming party of sorts for 651 as we prepare to move into our new home at 10 Lafayette which is adjacent to the Plaza.”

651’s Third Annual Juneteenth Celebration will be hosted on The Plaza of the institution’s new home at 10 Lafayette which it will move into officially this Summer. The move is a milestone in the organization’s history and will mark the first time that 651 ARTS will have a permanent space to independently program and operate - allowing it to comprehensively foster artists and cultivate new audiences.

651 ARTS’ Juneteenth Celebration is an annual commemoration of African-American liberation, resilience and self-determination featuring performances, panels and community engagement activities that honors the brilliance and vitality of Black culture.

Juneteenth is an annual commemoration of the end of slavery in the United States. Though the Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves was signed January 1, 1863, enslaved African-Americans in Galveston Bay, Texas learned of their freedom from the Union Army, June 19, 1865, after the Emancipation Proclamation was announced. Juneteenth is the longest standing African-American holiday observed in the United States.

Ticket Info: Admission is free. Registration, while not required, is highly suggested. To register, click [HERE](#)

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

All information on upcoming performances for The Soapbox Presents can be found on Instagram [@thesoapboxpresents](#)

About The Soapbox Presents

THE SOAPBOX PRESENTS is a platform, literally and figuratively, for Black and brown expression. Founded by Marija Abney, in response to the murder of George Floyd, The Soapbox Presents creates a space for us to commune, resist, be rejuvenated and revived in celebration of the brilliance of Black and brown people through the performing arts. Since 2020, the organization has provided free arts programming to the community featuring some of NYC's most talented artists. From Mahogany L Browne (Lincoln Center's first poet-in-residence) to Sean Mason (arranger, composer, pianist, and featured guest of the Wynton Marsalis Quintet), The Soapbox Presents gives Black and brown artists the opportunity to give back to their communities and each and every artist featured on the platform is paid.

The Soapbox Presents is the recipient of The Mellon Foundation's Humanities in Place grant 2021-2024, and, in 2021, was acknowledged for its work by the United Nations in their inaugural International Day of People of African Descent. In 2022, the organization was celebrated in a "Positively Black" segment on NBC New York, and most recently in 2023, it received Open Plan's People's Choice Award for best activator in their first annual Public Space Awards. The Soapbox Presents has performed at The Apollo, Symphony Space, and Lincoln Center but most significantly on the street corners and sidewalks of New York City.

About 651 ARTS

Founded in Brooklyn, NY in 1988, the mission of 651 ARTS is to deepen awareness of and appreciation for 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.

About Downtown Brooklyn Partnership

Downtown Brooklyn Partnership is a not-for-profit local development corporation that serves as the primary champion for Downtown Brooklyn as a world-class business, cultural, educational, residential, and retail destination. Working together with the three business improvement districts (BID) that it manages – the MetroTech BID, Fulton Mall Improvement Association, and Court-Livingston-Schermerhorn BID – the Partnership's diverse activities include attracting new businesses and improving the environment for existing companies; facilitating the construction of public spaces and streetscapes that promote an active and cohesive community; supporting and promoting Downtown Brooklyn's cultural assets; and encouraging a unified sense of place and an engaged civic community. For more information, visit www.downtownbrooklyn.com.

About The Plaza at 300 Ashland

The Plaza at 300 Ashland sits at the heart of the Brooklyn Cultural District, adjacent to the brownstone Brooklyn neighborhoods of Fort Greene, Boerum Hill, and Park Slope. DBP has partnered with premier Brooklyn arts organizations such as BAM, BRIC, Brooklyn Public Library, Mark Morris Dance Group, MoCADA, 651 ARTS, and Theatre for a New Audience (TFANA) to offer free, high-quality programming for everyone. Programming at The Plaza at 300 Ashland is made possible by support from Two Trees Management Co.

Major support for Juneteenth was provided by Con Edison and the Baisley Powell Elebash Fund.

651 ARTS' programs are made possible by gifts from generous individuals and grants from the The Bay and Paul Foundations, 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 Mosaic Network & Fund, and Wallace Foundation. 651 ARTS is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in Partnership with the City Council. This program is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature.

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