



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

651 ARTS Launches Fall 2023 Season with the Premiere of

DELIRIOUS Dances/Edisa Weeks' *3 RITES: Life, Liberty, Happiness*

The Epic Performance Trilogy will Include Three Installments To Extend Across Three Months of Performances Beginning in September

(Brooklyn, NY – September 7, 2023) – 651 ARTS - Brooklyn's premier institution for the African Diasporic performing arts - will launch its Fall 2023 Season with **DELIRIOUS Dances/Edisa Weeks'** epic performance trilogy *3 RITES: Life, Liberty, Happiness*. Conceived by the renowned Brooklyn-based choreographer, educator and multimedia artist, the series is comprised of three different interactive performance rituals integrating dance, live music, text, visual installations, community discussions and shared meals to explore why life, liberty and happiness were included as unalienable rights in the United States' Declaration of Independence. Each installment will center around what these rights mean today, who has access to them, and how they manifest in the body. *3 RITES* will kick-off with *3 RITES: Life* - marking the first time this work-in-process will be performed for the public - in September (September 14-17) followed by the world premieres of *3 RITES: Liberty* in October (Oct. 12-15) and *3 RITES: Happiness* in November (Nov. 16-18).

Produced by curator and Creative Producer **María Wethers** *3 RITES* seeks to reckon with America's past, present and potential future and, in *3 RITES: Life*, Weeks examines that future with an emphasis on responsible stewardship of nature, environmental activism in marginalized communities and questions the nation's dependency on fossil fuels. Intended to be an intimate gathering, *Life* begins in The Greenroom - an interactive educational space where the audience can participate in a host of activities promoting environmental awareness and advocacy including coloring in a chalk mural depicting images and quotes by Black environmental activists as well as creative reuse workshops where they can make beads out of plastic straws or musical instruments out of discarded objects. From The Greenroom, the audience transitions to move through the Black Spirit Room and The Wasteland which will also both include dance performances. Visually resembling a mash-up of a DIY haunted house and Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, these two spaces are performance installations made from plastic trash. *3 RITES: Life* will take place at Chashama in Midtown Manhattan.

Set to premiere in October at the Mark O'Donnell Theater in Brooklyn, *3 RITES: Liberty* addresses the past and present by humorously and poignantly digging into the pathologizing of African-Americans and the foundations and history of liberty in America. *3 RITES: Liberty* begins with an installation of roots made out of paper and twine that hang from the ceiling to the floor. The audience moves through the maze of roots to eventually meet the Liberty character (played by Weeks) whose hair is braided to echo the Statue of Liberty's crown and is connected via tie-lines and pulleys to objects that have informed the Black experience in America. Throughout the piece, Weeks alternates between black face, white face, storytelling and visceral dance. The *Liberty* rite examines the laws and specious psychological disorders that helped develop the biases, bigotry and racist structures that permeate American society. Following each performance will be a discussion about racial structures in America and what can be done to dismantle them featuring Restorative Justice Facilitator **Nicole Lavonne Smith-Johnson**.

The final installment - *3 RITES: Happiness* - will premiere at the historic Weeksville Heritage Center in November and will investigate how laughter and pleasure reside in the body. This rite is about self-care, and making time to relax, laugh and recharge for the labor to uphold the values of life, liberty and happiness. The piece will feature four DELIRIOUS dancers and commissioned music from **Nathaniel Braddock** to be played live by the **Occidental Brothers Dance Band International**. The rite begins with the Happiness Fête where the audience is invited to engage in a collective celebration of wellness and joy which includes portrait sketches, massages, fantastical and playful hair designs by Delirious Hair Designs and line dancing. In the spirit of meal sharing, a family-style cuisine will also be provided to patrons catered by **Chef Lex** and the **Brownsville Community Culinary Center**.

"In *3 RITES* I'm seeking to reckon with America's past, present and potential future, by engaging people in the ideals that are a core part of America's foundation and generating a dialogue about what needs to be done to ensure these ideals apply to everyone," said Weeks. "I am interested in bringing diverse groups of people together through dance, song, installations, storytelling, laughter, food and conversations. I truly believe that art revitalizes the everyday to reveal something new about ourselves; and that revelation has the power to change the world."

"Conceived and created by visionary artist Edisa Weeks, *3 RITES: Life, Liberty, Happiness* takes the audience on a journey through important issues affecting society today," said Wethers. "From participatory education about environmental (in)justice in *Life*; commenting on challenges to our freedoms and inspiring communal liberatory practices in *Liberty*; and uplifting the transformative power of collective joy in *Happiness*; the *3 RITES* trilogy is a balm for our times."

"For 35 years, 651 has been a champion and nurturer for artists. Not only do we take pride in being a platform for them to present their work, but we are also with them throughout the journey of that work," said 651 ARTS' Executive Director **Toya Lillard**. "651 has a longstanding relationship with Edisa and, with *3 RITES*, it is so exciting to be able present the premiere of *Liberty* and *Happiness* and to witness *Life* being performed for the public for the first time. Artists like Edisa are the reason why we do what we do!"

3 RITES is produced by Maríya Wethers and commissioned and presented by 651 ARTS, with co-commissioners Billie Holiday Theater, Kelly Strayhorn Theater, Mount Tremper Arts, and National Performance Network.

3 RITES: LIFE, LIBERTY, HAPPINESS SCHEDULE

3 RITES: Life

Date: Thursday, September 14, 2023 - Saturday September 16, 2023 @ 6pm; Sunday, September 17, 2023 @ 3pm

Location: Chashama (1155 Avenue of the Americas- NY, NY 10036)

3 RITES: Liberty

Date: Thursday, October 12, 2023 - Saturday October 14, 2023 @ 8pm; Sunday, October 15, 2023 @ 3pm

Location: Mark O'Donnell Theater (160 Schermerhorn Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201)

3 RITES: Happiness

Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023 & Friday, November 17, 2023 @ 6pm; Saturday November 18, 2023 (Two Performances - 1pm & 6pm)

Location: Weeksville Heritage Center (158 Buffalo Avenue - Brooklyn, NY 11213)

TICKETS: *3 RITES: Life* - \$15.00 / \$10.00 Students; *3 RITES: Liberty* - \$25.00 / \$20.00 Students; *3 RITES: Happiness* - \$35.00 / \$30.00 Students. There are limited packages available for *3 RITES: Life, Liberty, Happiness* trilogy. For more information, please visit: www.651arts.com

About Edisa Weeks/DELIRIOUS Dances

Edisa Weeks is a choreographer, educator and founder of DELIRIOUS Dances. She creates multimedia interactive work that merges theater with dance to explore our deepest desires, darkest fears and sweetest dreams. She grew up in Uganda, Papua New Guinea and Brooklyn, NY; and teaches choreography, improvisation, modern technique, and mentors emerging artists at Queens College, CUNY. www.deliriousdances.com

Founded by multi-disciplinary artist Edisa Weeks, DELIRIOUS Dances seeks to erase the barriers between art and life, between performance space and audience space, and between mediums. We are interested in finding ways for the audience to interact with and influence the experience of a work. We believe that art revitalizes the everyday to reveal something new about ourselves, and the revelation is an energy, a spark that has the power to change the world.

3 RITES is a National Performance Network/Visual Artists Network (NPN/VAN) Creation & Development Fund Project co-commissioned by 651 ARTS, Mount Tremper Arts, RestorationART, Kelly Strayhorn Theater, DancePlace and NPN/VAN. 3 RITES is made possible in part through funding from the Brooklyn Arts Council; Creative Capital; Durst Organization; Harkness Foundation for Dance; The New England Foundation for the Arts, National Dance Project which is generously supported with lead funding from the Doris Duke Foundation and the Mellon Foundation; New Music USA; New York State Council on the Arts with the support of

the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature; a PSC-CUNY Award, jointly funded by The Professional Staff Congress and The City University of New York; The Puffin Foundation, as well as through the sponsorship of The Field; and the generosity of individuals.

3 RITES was developed through creative residencies with BRICLab; Chashama Space to Create; ChoreoQuest at RestorationART - Billie Holiday Theater; a remote residency with the Experimental Media and Performance Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; Dance in Process at Gibney Dance with funds provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the Harlem Stage WaterWorks Emerging Artists program, which received support from the Jerome Foundation and the Mellon Foundation; Mabou Mines SUITE/Space program; Maggie Allessee National Center for Choreography; Materials for the Arts; New York State Dance Force residencies at Topaz Arts and at Hobart and William Smith Colleges; Norte Maar @ Socrates Sculpture Park; and Snug Harbor Cultural Center.

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.

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For more information:

Nina Flowers ninaflowerspr@gmail.com

(917) 388-7444