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651 ARTS EXPANDS BOARD OF DIRECTORS TO WELCOME TWO NEW MEMBERS CHINA MOSES AND CYNTHIA GORDY GIWA

Appointments Signify Institution's Continued Institutional Expansion



(Brooklyn, NY – June 26, 2024) – 651 ARTS - Brooklyn's premier organization for the African Diasporic performing arts – is pleased to welcome two new members to its esteemed Board of Directors: singer, songwriter, producer, and Founder of MadeInChina Productions, **China Moses**; and writer, filmmaker, and Founder of Black-Owned Brooklyn **Cynthia Gordy Giwa**. Both respected leaders in the Arts, Moses and Giwa's appointments reflect a key milestone as part of 651's strategic growth plan and is a pivotal moment for the institution - which is in the midst of a major expansion as the organization prepares to move into its first-ever permanent home in Downtown Brooklyn later this year.

As new Board members, Moses and Giwa will lend their invaluable expertise and bring fresh perspectives to help the institution's leadership guide a reimagined 651 ARTS usher in a new chapter in its evolution. Collaborating closely with 651's Executive Director **Toya A. Lillard**, the Board of Directors is committed to the organization's mission to deepen the 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 Board of Directors has always been a vital part of the growth and expansion for this legacy institution which has been a fixture and staple to the Brooklyn community for over 35 years. As we look forward to 651's future and creating a sustainable model for the organization, Board development is crucial to our success," said **Lillard**. "China and Cynthia are both Brooklynites who have a passion for uplifting Black art and providing space for art makers in Brooklyn and beyond. We are delighted to have their insight and experience guiding our

mission, vision and impact during this historic moment in 651 ARTS' history. I look forward to partnering with them and the entire Board of Directors.”

“In order to be a fully sustainable and thriving Arts institution, we know that building a strong Board is integral to that process,” said Board Chair **Robyne Walker Murphy**. “With China and Cynthia now on the Board, I think we have created a perfect balance of individuals who will be dedicated, engaged and who will come together to advance the institution forward as a leader of African Diasporic culture while also establishing it as an incubator for artistic innovation in the 21st century.”

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. Located at 300 Ashland, 651's new home will include its own state-of-the-art black box theater, two rehearsal studios, and a media studio, enabling the institution to provide artists with essential and flexible new modes of support - and to further foster artists and cultivate new audiences.

About Cynthia Gordy Giwa

Cynthia Gordy Giwa is a writer, filmmaker and founder of the online publication and Instagram community Black-Owned Brooklyn, which she runs with her husband Tayo Giwa. Established in 2018, Black-Owned Brooklyn documents and preserves stories of Black business, culture and history that are often erased in gentrifying communities. Cynthia also does this work through documentary filmmaking. Her latest film, *The Sun Rises in The East* (2022), chronicles the history of The East, an influential yet little-remembered cultural and political collective that flourished in 1970's Bedford-Stuyvesant. Her short film *Soul Summit: Doin' It in the Park* (2000) tells the story of Fort Greene's iconic Soul Summit house music party. In addition, Cynthia curates and produces large-scale community events, including an annual Juneteenth Food Festival held in collaboration with Weeksville Heritage Center.

A former journalist with a stint as the first-ever White House Correspondent for *Essence Magazine*, Cynthia has written extensively on race, class, culture and public policy. Her work has also appeared in *The Root*, *Slate*, *The Washington Post* and NPR.

Cynthia most recently served as director of marketing for the nonprofit investigative newsroom *ProPublica*, as well as deputy communications director at the racial justice organization Advancement Project, where she spearheaded media strategy for advocacy campaigns on voting rights, education equity and youth criminalization.

She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and their two daughters.

About China Moses

China Moses is a versatile singer-songwriter and producer rooted in Black American music. She has released seven albums and founded her production company, MadeInChina Productions. As a broadcaster, she hosts *Made in China* on TSF Jazz (France) and *Late Night China Moses* on Jazz FM (UK), making her one of the few women of color to host multiple shows across Europe and the UK. A seasoned performer, China has performed in over 800 shows globally and is the French voice of Disney's *Princess and the Frog* main protagonist, Tiana. She co-founded the Tahiti Soul Jazz Festival and the Paris Soul Festival and has mentored and advised for various programs (Montreux Jazz, Power 2 Inspire, Villa Albertine...).

A French-American Foundation Young Leader of the class of 2013, she was recognized for her contributions and knighted in the French National Order of Merit in 2023.

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.

651 ARTS' programs are made possible by gifts from generous individuals and grants from the Altman Foundation, The Bay and Paul Foundations, The Black Seed Fund, Booth Ferris Foundation, Burberry, Con Edison, Doris Duke Foundation, Ford Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Lambent Foundation, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, New England Foundation for the Arts, New York Community Trust Mosaic Network & Fund, and Wallace Foundation. 651 ARTS is supported, in part, by public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in Partnership with the City Council, and New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature.

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