

BAM

2017 WINTER/SPRING SEASON

BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC PETER JAY SHARP BUILDING 30 LAFAYETTE AVENUE BROOKLYN, NY 11217—1486

BAM presents 2017 DanceAfrica Festival, May 26—29

The nation's largest African dance festival and BAM's longest-running program celebrates its 40th anniversary with a special program, including Guinean dance and a reunion of past favorites

Annual traditions include the Tribute to the Ancestors, Community Day, dance workshops, visual arts, *FilmAfrica*, and DanceAfrica Bazaar

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the Season Sponsor

DanceAfrica 2017

The Healing Light of Rhythm: Tradition and Beyond

Artistic Director Abdel R. Salaam and Artistic Director Emeritus Chuck Davis

Wula Drum and Dance Ensemble
Asase Yaa
Forces of Nature
Illstyle and Peace Productions
BAM/Restoration Dance Youth Ensemble

Lighting design by Al Crawford
Sound design by David Margolin Lawson

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House (30 Lafayette Ave)
May 26 at 7:30pm; May 27 at 2pm & 7pm; May 28 & 29 at 3pm
Tickets start at \$25 (half-price for ages 16 & under)

May 19, 2017/Brooklyn, NY—DanceAfrica, the country's largest showcase of African dance, celebrates its 40th anniversary this year with *The Healing Light of Rhythm: Tradition and Beyond*. Dancers, drummers, and musicians, some past favorites, some new to the Festival, take the stage together in a special program designed by Artistic Director **Abdel R. Salaam** to mark the occasion.

Artistic Director Emeritus **Chuck Davis**, who passed away just days before the start of this year's festival, first put an "African Village" in BAM's Lepercq Space in 1977, thus launching a now 40-year-long program that has become an enduring tradition with performances by

domestic and international companies, community events, education components, films, visual arts, and an all-out celebration of African and African-American dance culture. More than 80 dance troupes from more than 15 nations have participated in this annual showcase, including companies from Ivory Coast, Congo, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zaire, Benin, Uganda, Ghana, Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Peru, Zambia, Madagascar, Senegal, and the US.

BAM has hosted this important festival for 40 years, an unparalleled part of BAM's history. It is now led by Abdel R. Salaam, who honors the tradition this year by curating a program that celebrates the past and the present. **Asase Yaa**, **Forces of Nature**, and **Illstyle & Peace Productions**, which have all performed in previous DanceAfricas, take the stage in the first half in a diverse style mash-up. For the second half, **Wula Dance and Drum Ensemble**, a company of Guinean dance and drum masters led by **M'Bemba Bangoura**, continues the exploration of the diverse African dance cultures. All will be joined on stage by the **BAM/Restoration Dance Youth Ensemble**, which celebrates its own 20th anniversary. An integral component of the Festival, the Ensemble symbolizes DanceAfrica's commitment to education and community outreach.

Community events

A Tribute to the Ancestors ceremony will be held at 10am on May 20 at the Weeksville Heritage Center (1698 Bergen St, Brooklyn). This traditional ceremony, which includes dancing and music by participating artists, is an integral part of DanceAfrica that honors elders who have passed on. The event is free and open to the public.

It will be followed by the DanceAfrica Community Day at Restoration Plaza (1368 Fulton St, Brooklyn) at 1pm to kick off the annual festival. It features performances by students from RestorationART who have participated in BAM Education's DanceAfrica program.

The Memorial Day weekend celebration also includes the popular DanceAfrica outdoor Bazaar which hosts more than 150 vendors selling crafts, food, and fashion; dance workshops, and *FilmAfrica*, a BAMcinémathek film series at BAM Rose Cinemas. Information on *FilmAfrica* is below.

The 2017 recipients of the Samuel H. Scripps BAM Scholarship for post-secondary education will be awarded on the BAM Howard Gilman Opera House stage on May 26. Inspired by the spirit of DanceAfrica, BAM Trustee Richard Feldman launched the Samuel H. Scripps BAM Scholarship Fund in 2008, in memory of former BAM Trustee and arts patron Samuel Scripps. The scholarships exclusively benefit students who have participated in BAM's arts education programs, including the DanceAfrica Education initiative. This year's recipients include Nesrien Alnabulsi, Assy Barry, Nyasiah Colon, Toni Greenidge-Aigle, Naomi Johnson, Akiva Johnson, Sarujen Sivakumar, Taylor Thomas, Ky To, and Tyriese White.

Tamara Thomas, the second Chuck Davis Emerging Choreographer Fellow, will also be feted at the May 26 performance. Created to honor Baba Chuck Davis, this unique opportunity offers dance practitioners the chance to travel to Africa and study with masters of African dance. Thomas is an educator, performing artist, and choreographer. Her artistic vision involves the integration of arts and community development. This focus has been shared with organizations such as Dreams Wilmington, Upward Bound, and the Friends Neighborhood Guild and drove the creation of The Nkonsonkonson Afrikan Youth Ensemble in Kingston, Jamaica.

Baba Chuck Davis Memorial

A memorial service will be held on the Howard Gilman Opera House stage to honor the late Chuck Davis, who passed away on May 14. Various DanceAfrica constituents, past and present, will participate in commemorating and celebrating his life and legacy. The public is invited to pay tribute. The memorial is on May 28 at 7:30pm.

For press information, contact David Hsieh at dhsieh@BAM.org or 718.636.4129 x5.

About the Artists

Wula Drum and Dance Ensemble is made up of 17 master drummers, dancers, and instrumentalists, all from their native country of Guinea. They bring with them the vast knowledge of the traditional music and dance from each region and represent more than 15 different Guinean ethnicities. Its Artistic Director **M'bemba Bangoura** has traveled the world as a performer and teacher of the Djembe drum and is revered for his high level of mastery. As a native of Guinea, Bangoura began playing the djembe at the young age of seven. By the age of 21, he was acclaimed as a master drummer and was invited to play for Ballet Djoliba, the national company of Guinea. Since moving to the US in 1992, Bangoura has become an integral part of the drum and dance scene. He has taught hundreds of students, many of who are now teachers themselves. In addition, he has personally created choreography and developed repertoire for dozens of dance companies worldwide.

Executive Artistic Director/Choreographer Abdel R. Salaam and Executive Managing Director Olabamidele Husbands co-founded the **Forces of Nature** in 1981. Along with founding company member Dyane Harvey, Forces of Nature has produced professional ballets, conducted dance classes, and presented concerts and educational programs in New York City, the US, and throughout the world for over 36 years, including annual appearances at Aaron Davis Hall, the Apollo Theater in Harlem, and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Forces of Nature Dance has been presented by the Joyce Theater, the DanceAfrica Festival, the American Dance Festival, the International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD) conference, the First International Black Dance Festival (UK); and the International Dance Festival in Aruba, among others.

Artistic Director Yao Ababio founded **Asase Yaa** in 2001, featuring seasoned musicians, dancers, and vocalists. The array of artistic skill allows this company to create unique productions that portray the authentic richness of the African diaspora experience. The company has appeared on *VH1's* Hip Hop Honors Awards; the premiere of *Sing your Song*, a documentary on Harry Belafonte at the Apollo Theater; DanceAfrica New York and Chicago; Kente Arts Alliance in Pittsburgh; and at the first (2014) annual dance festival at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. In January 2013 Asase Yaa opened its own multi-cultural performing arts facility in Brooklyn.

Illstyle & Peace Productions is a multicultural Philadelphia-based dance company founded in 2000 by Brandon "Peace" Albright. The company creates work rooted in contemporary, West African, old-school, and new-school hip-hop blended with an eclectic mix of dance and performance disciplines, including, breaking, popping, locking, tap, hip-hop, and house dancing. It has toured to critical acclaim nationally and internationally, and is committed to delivering positive messages to all audiences. Illstyle & Peace Productions was a 2013 US Culture Ambassador, chosen by the State Department and BAM, and toured Russia, Belarus, and the Ukraine.

An annual favorite and symbol of youth involvement in the preservation of African heritage, the **BAM/Restoration Dance Youth Ensemble** returns to BAM for the 20th year. Under the artistic

direction of Ronald K. Brown, Arcell Cabuag, and Karen Thornton-Daniels, the gifted young dancers of RestorationArt celebrate both ancestral roots and present-day community. *The Village Voice* has praised these young dancers as “exuberant and disciplined” and “a group worth following.”

Abdel R. Salaam is both the artistic director of DanceAfrica and the executive artistic director/co-founder and choreographer of Forces of Nature Dance Theatre (FONDT), established in 1981. He and his company led the historic procession for Nelson and Winnie Mandela on their visit to New York in 1990. He has directed and choreographed for theater and television to critical acclaim and has been active in the world of the performing and visual arts since 1955. Salaam has served on the faculties of Lehman College, the American Dance Festival in the US and Korea, Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, and the Chuck Davis Dance Academy. He is currently one of the directors of the Harlem Children's Zone/Forces of Nature Youth Academy of Dance and Wellness at St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Harlem. Some of the awards Salaam has received include the Monarch Merit Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance from the National Council for Arts & Culture (1993); the Silver Anniversary Award for Outstanding Achievement in Choreography, Teaching and Performance from Lehman College (1994); and Better Family Life Lifetime Achievement Award in Arts (2000). Salaam is a 2004 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow and was selected as artist in residence at Tennessee Performing Art Center from 2003 to 2007. FONDT, along with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, received the 41st annual Audelco Award for Excellence in Black Theater Award as the 2013 Dance Company of the Year.

Dr. Charles “Chuck” Davis (1937-2017), artistic director emeritus and founding elder of DanceAfrica (established at BAM in 1977), is one of the most sought-after teachers and choreographers of traditional African dance in America. He has traveled extensively to Africa to study with leading artists. Davis founded the Chuck Davis Dance Company in New York in 1968 and the African American Dance Ensemble in Durham, NC, in 1983. He has been a panelist for several programs of the National Endowment for the Arts and is a recipient of the AARP Certificate of Excellence, the North Carolina Dance Alliance Award, the 1990 North Carolina Artist Award, and the North Carolina Order of the Long Leaf Pine. He served on the board of the North Carolina Arts Council in 1991 and 2004. In 1992 he received the North Carolina Award in Fine Arts, the state's highest honor. In 1996, Davis and the African American Dance Ensemble were awarded a \$100,000 grant from the National Dance Residency Program, a three-year initiative launched in 1994 by the New York Foundation for the Arts and funded by the Pew Charitable Trust. In 1998 he received an honorary doctorate from Medgar Evers College. Chuck Davis received a Dance Magazine Award in 2004. He and DanceAfrica were cited as one of “America's Irreplaceable Dance Treasures: The First 100” by the Dance Heritage Coalition. He was honored with a Bessie award for outstanding service to the field of dance in 2014 and the American Dance Festival 2015 was dedicated to Davis.

DanceAfrica Bazaar

Each year, the free outdoor Bazaar delights the crowds with local and international vendors who transform the streets surrounding BAM into a marketplace of African, Caribbean, and African American food, fashion, artifacts, jewelry, and crafts. An estimated 40,000 people from all five boroughs of New York and the tri-state area sample these delights and bask in the communal atmosphere throughout the weekend. *The Village Voice* declared it “the boldest party in town” and *The New York Times* called it “a colorful kickoff for the summer street festival season.” The bazaar also features entertainment for families.

The bazaar takes place on May 27 from 12–10pm, and on May 28 & 29 from 12–8pm on Ashland Pl between Hanson Pl & Fulton St. Admission is free and hours are subject to change.

DanceAfrica Workshops

Co-presented by BAM and Mark Morris Dance Group

Mon, May 29 at 10am: Family Workshops \$10, \$5 (ages 15 and under)

Mon, May 29 at 12pm: Master Class \$12

Visual Arts

Maeva Kounta is a painter and illustrator based in Conakry, Guinea. She started drawing at young age and graduated from the University of Conakry in 1998. In 2001 Kounta was featured in an exhibition in the CCF French Cultural Center and was selected to be the representative of the publishing firm House Editions Gannal in the workshop of Mali Bamako for illustrators. She has spent time living abroad in England, where she completed further education in accounting studies. Kounta currently lives in Conakry where she works as a translator and focuses on her artistic practice.

FilmAfrica at BAMcinématek

This annual series serves as a cinematic companion to DanceAfrica. Co-presented by the New York African Film Festival, *FilmAfrica* showcases the best fiction and documentary films from across the continent, with a special focus on Guinea.

***Rain the Color Blue with a Little Red in it* (2015)**

Directed by Christopher Kirkley in collaboration with Mdou Moctar & Jerome Fino.

This homage to *Purple Rain* is the universal story of one musician's struggle to make it against all odds (from rivals to family to the trials of love), set in the Tuareg guitar scene in Niger.

Fri, May 26 at 7pm (75min)

***Clouds over Conakry* (2007)**

Directed by Cheick Fantamady Camara.

Artist BB is faced with an impossible choice. Son of the inflexible Imam Karamo, he is chosen to be his father's successor. But he refuses to accept his destiny and chooses to live his own life instead.

Fri, May 26 at 9pm (113min)

***Martha & Niki* (2015)**

Directed by Tora Mkandawire Mårtens.

In 2010, Martha Nabwire and Niki Tsappos became the first-ever female champions of the Juste Debout in Paris, the largest hip-hop street dance competition in the world. This documentary chronicles their incredible story of personal determination, friendship, and fierce artistry.

Sat, May 27 at 2 & 7pm (93min)

***Paris According to Moussa* (2003)**

Directed by Cheik Doukouré.

Moussa is appointed to go and buy a new water pump in Paris. On his journey, he encounters typical immigrant difficulties: crime, police raids, odd jobs, but finds solidarity with the community in France.

Sat, May 27 at 4:30 & 9:15pm (96min)

***Le ballon d'or* (1994)**

Directed by Cheik Doukouré. With Aboubacar Sidiki Sumah, Agnès Soral, Habib Hammoud.

A spirited young boy pursues his dream of becoming a professional soccer player in this vivid, joyous portrait of growing up in West Africa
Sun, May 28 at 7pm (93 min)

Guinean independence documentaries (1959-1961)

One of the first African nations to win its independence, this program of rare documentaries gives an intimate first-hand account of life in Guinea in the first years of independence.

Sun, May 28 at 4:30 & 9:15PM (80min)

Hello Guinea

Archival footage from former USSR (1961)

Leonard Brezhnev visits Guinea and is welcomed by Sekou Touré and the people of Guinea. This film is a brief sojourn into the heart of newly independent Guinea only three years after decolonization. (20 min)

Independently Guinea

Archival footage from former USSR (1959)

One year after independence, we catch a glimpse of life in Guinea. The revolution is still alive in the minds and hearts of the people. (40 min)

The President of Guinea in the USSR

Archival Newsreel from former USSR and Guinea (1959)

Communist leaders welcome Guinean President Sékou Ahmed Touré on his first visit to the USSR as the leader of an independent Guinea. (20 min)

***Price of Love* (2015)**

Directed by Hermon Hailay.

When Teddy intervenes in a fight between a prostitute and her ex-boyfriend, his taxi is stolen. Finding himself caught up in a relationship with the woman as they search for his car, he must confront his past.

Mon, May 29 at 2 & 7pm (109min)

Shorts program (2013-2015)

This program brings together four exciting young French-African filmmakers, with a group of contemporary, urgent stories on themes of love and connection that create a complex portrait of life in the diaspora.

Mon, May 29 at 4:30 & 9:15pm (113min)

The Return / Le Retour

Directed by Yohann Kouam, France, 2013, 22m (French with English subtitles)

The Sense of Touch / Le sens du toucher

Directed by Jean-Charles Mbotti Malolo, France, 2015, 15m (French with English subtitle)

Destino

Directed by Zangro, France, 2015, 26m (French with English subtitles)

Towards Tenderness / Vers la tendresse

Directed by Alice Diop, France, 2015, 40m (French with English subtitles)

FilmAfrica press contact: Maureen Masters, mmasters@BAM.org or 718.724.8023.

BAM Rose Cinemas (30 Lafayette Ave)

Tickets: \$14 per screening for adults; \$10 (seniors & veterans); \$7 (members levels 1-3); free (members levels 4 & above)

Tickets available by phone at 718.777.FILM or by visiting BAM.org

Credits

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General Information

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, BAM Rose Cinemas, and BAMcafé are located in the Peter Jay Sharp building at 30 Lafayette Avenue (between St Felix Street and Ashland Place) in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn. BAM Harvey Theater is located two blocks from the main building at 651 Fulton Street (between Ashland and Rockwell Places). Both locations house Greenlight Bookstore at BAM kiosks. BAM Fisher, located at 321 Ashland Place, is the newest addition to the BAM campus and houses the Judith and Alan Fishman Space and Rita K. Hillman Studio. BAM Rose Cinemas is Brooklyn's only movie house dedicated to first-run independent and foreign film and repertory programming. BAMcafé, operated by Great Performances, offers a dinner menu prior to most BAM Howard Gilman Opera House evening performances, featuring varied light fare and bar service. BAMcafé also features

an eclectic mix of live music for BAMcafé Live on Friday and Saturday nights with bar service and light dining available from 6pm.

Subway: 2, 3, 4, 5, Q, B to Atlantic Avenue – Barclays Center (2, 3, 4, 5 to Nevins St for Harvey Theater); D, N, R to Pacific Street; G to Fulton Street; C to Lafayette Avenue
Train: Long Island Railroad to Atlantic Terminal – Barclays Center
Bus: B25, B26, B41, B45, B52, B63, B67 all stop within three blocks of BAM
Car: Limited commercial parking lots are located near BAM. Visit BAM.org for information.

For ticket information, call BAM Ticket Services at 718.636.4100, or visit BAM.org.

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