



Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) Announces Details on the *35th Annual Brooklyn Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* A Virtual Event

With music performances by Grammy Award-winning R&B artist PJ Morton, Tank and the Bangas lead vocalist Tarriona "Tank" Ball, and Vy Higginsen's award-winning choir Sing Harlem!—Mon, Jan 18, 2021

Let Freedom Ring, a week-long outdoor/public art takeover designed to provoke community dialogue around the idea of freedom—featuring new and existing work by Derrick Adams, Alvin Armstrong, Lizania Cruz, Hank Willis Thomas, Jasmine Wahi, and others, Jan 15—21, 2021

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the Season Sponsor

Presented by BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music) and The Office of the Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams



PJ Morton (c) Dominic Scott
Photos are available [here](#).

December 17, 2020/Brooklyn, NY—Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) today announced details of its *35th Annual Brooklyn Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, which brings together artists, activists, civic leaders, and the public for a communal commemoration and reflection on the life and legacy of Dr. King, on **Monday, January 18, 2021**. The 2021 event welcomes back artists who have performed at BAM. Performers include Grammy-winning solo artist and Maroon 5 keyboardist **PJ Morton**, Tank and the Bangas lead vocalist **Tarriona "Tank" Ball**, Vy Higginsen's award-winning choir **Sing Harlem!**, Brooklyn-based poet and BAM Artist Resident **Timothy DuWhite**, spoken word artist **Ashley August**, with more participants to be announced

at a later date. The *35th Annual Brooklyn Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* will be digitally streamed for free on BAM.org.

The anchor event will be complemented by a week-long public/outdoor art project. Harnessing the scale of BAM's outdoor digital outpost, *Let Freedom Ring* features the work of eight Brooklyn-based artists who use their art as a visual metaphor for the idea of freedom, inspired by the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and conversations around the historic 2021 presidential inauguration. The acclaimed artists—**Derrick Adams, Alvin Armstrong, Lizania Cruz, Hank Willis Thomas, and Jasmine Wahi** (*more to be announced at a later date*)—seek to encourage moments of reflection and dialogue. BAM will also present a free film screening of William Greaves's newly-restored documentary, *Nationtime*, about the National Black Political Convention of 1972, when 10,000 Black politicians, activists, and artists went to Gary, Indiana, to forge a national unity platform in advance of the Republican and Democratic presidential conventions. The film will run virtually on January 18, 2021.

"BAM's Annual Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a beloved tradition and one of the most important events on our calendar. Though we can't gather in person, we were determined to bring our communities together and create a space for celebration and reflection," said **BAM Vice President of Education and Community Engagement, Coco Killingsworth**. "It will be a joyful day of music and presentation by incredible artists, activists, and civic leaders who inspire us. We're pleased to continue this tradition as we bring the energy of our annual celebration into homes around the world."

Continuing a tradition in its 35th year that has evolved into the largest public gathering in New York City, BAM and The Office of the Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams present this annual event to celebrate with families and communities from Brooklyn and across New York City. To sustain the tradition while venues around the world remain closed, BAM will launch the annual event digitally, connecting communities across the nation.

The 35th Annual Brooklyn Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is free and open to the public, but RSVPs are strongly encouraged. RSVP will be available on December 23, 2020. The event will be streamed for free on BAM.org.

Contact Cynthia Tate at ctate@bam.org

Full Event Details

The 35th Annual Brooklyn Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

PJ Morton, Tarriona "Tank" Ball, Sing Harlem!, Timothy DuWhite, Ashley August, and more
Monday, January 18, 2021

Virtual

FREE (RSVPs are strongly encouraged, at BAM.org)

The *Annual Brooklyn Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, brings together artists, activists, civic leaders, and the public for a communal commemoration and reflection on the life and legacy of Dr. King, Jr. Audience members from around the world are invited to join BAM for New York City's largest public celebration of Dr. King's legacy, a free virtual program featuring Grammy Award-winning gospel and R&B artist and Maroon 5 keyboardist **PJ Morton**, Tank and the Bangas lead vocalist **Tarriona "Tank" Ball**, Vy Higgensen's award-winning choir **Sing Harlem!**, Brooklyn-based poet and 2020-2021 BAM Artist Resident **Timothy DuWhite**, spoken word artist **Ashley August**, and other leading artists and changemakers. The 2021 event draws inspiration from Dr. King's words, his life, and the actions of those around the nation who continue the fight for equality

and justice. The tribute to Dr. King grounds us in a message of hard-earned hope. Includes Closed Captioning. Visit BAM.org for more information

Visual art: *Let Freedom Ring*

Curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah

Art by Derrick Adams, Alvin Armstrong, Lizania Cruz, Hank Willis Thomas, & Jasmine Wahi

January 15—21, 2021

The BAM sign screen (corner of Flatbush Ave & Lafayette Ave)

Run time: Looped continuously

FREE

Harnessing the scale of BAM's outdoor digital signpost as a vehicle for public art, ***Let Freedom Ring*** features the work of eight Brooklyn-based creatives who are deeply engaged in an ongoing dialogue about the role of artists, art, social justice, equity, and inclusion. Spearheaded by BAM Curator-at-Large **Larry Ossei-Mensah**, the installation is centered around the art of Brooklyn and connects the community with larger cultural dialogues around freedom. Timed to coincide with the nation's annual commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the historic 2021 Presidential and Vice-Presidential inauguration, the acclaimed artists invite the viewer to engage critically with the work and reflect on what freedom truly means in 2021. *Let Freedom Ring* includes new and existing work by **Derrick Adams, Alvin Armstrong, Lizania Cruz, Hank Willis Thomas, and Jasmine Wahi**. More artists to be announced at a later date. The installation will be presented on the BAM sign at the corner of Lafayette and Flatbush Avenues and will run from January 15 through January 21.

Let Freedom Ring is an extension of the Freedom 2020 Awakening Campaign in collaboration with Unfinished, featuring artist-designed billboards throughout the United States. The year-long campaign launched in October 2020 and responds to For Freedoms' themes of healing, listening, justice, and awakening. Visit BAM.org for more information

Film: *Nationtime* (1972), directed by William Greaves

Special introduction by Rukia Lumumba

January 18, 2021

Virtual

FREE (RSVPs are mandatory, at BAM.org)

Tickets are limited

Best known for his avant-garde meta-documentary *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*, William Greaves (1926—2014) was also the director of over 100 documentary films, the majority focused on African American history, politics, and culture. *Nationtime* is a report on the National Black Political Convention held in Gary, Indiana, in 1972, a historic event that gathered black voices from across the political spectrum, among them Jesse Jackson, Dick Gregory, Coretta Scott King, Richard Hatcher, Amiri Baraka, Charles Diggs, and H. Carl McCall. Narrated by Sidney Poitier, the film was considered too militant for television broadcast at the time and has since circulated only in an edited 60-minute version. This new 4K restoration from IndieCollect, with funding from Jane Fonda and the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, returns the film to its original length and visual quality. Courtesy of Kino Lorber. (80min)

Rukia Lumumba, Co-Founder and Executive Director of People's Advocacy Institute, will give a special introduction, reflecting on the legacy of the 1972 National Black Political Convention and her work as the co-producer of the 2020 Black National Convention.

View the Nationtime trailer [here](#)
Visit BAM.org for more information

About the Artists

Derrick Adams was born in Baltimore, MD in 1970 and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. His work spans painting, collage, sculpture, performance, video, and sound installations. He received his MFA from Columbia University, BFA from Pratt Institute, and is an alumnus of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program. He is a recipient of a Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Residency, Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship, Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize, and Louis Comfort Tiffany Award. Adams' solo exhibitions include *Buoyant* at Hudson River Museum; *Where I'm From* at The Gallery in Baltimore City Hall; *Patrick Kelly: The Journey* at Studio Museum in Harlem satellite Countee Cullen Library, NY; *Sanctuary* at Museum of Arts and Design, NY; *Transmission* at Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver; *Network* at California African American Museum, Los Angeles; and *The Channel* at Brooklyn Academy of Music. His work is in the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Studio Museum in Harlem, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Birmingham Museum of Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Alvin Armstrong was born in San Diego, CA, and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He is a painter whose work explores the social and political landscape of Black American culture. His paintings are often filled with real and fictional subjects, culled from black and white archival material, his community, and lived experiences. Armstrong received an MS in Oriental Medicine and is a licensed acupuncturist. He's lived in Hawaii, Japan, and California all of which have informed his art practice. His solo exhibition *This Place Looks Different* was held at Medium Tings, a gallery and project space in September 2020 and he was just recently selected as a resident for Pioneer Work's 2021 class.

Ashley August is Black, alive, and loves a good list! She is an Afro-Latina actress, author, playwright, activist, teaching artist, and touring spoken word artist. August is ranked as the third woman poet in the world and is a former Youth Poet Laureate of New York City. She was recently named one of *The New York Times* 30 Under 30 Most Influential people. Stage and screen credits include Sundance Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, Netflix, Aljazeera America, The GAP, BET, and HBO. Writer and performance credits include Adidas, Refinery 29, Under Armour, Nike, MTV, and more. August is the author of three self-exploratory books, *Love Handles*, *Licorice*, and *Say I Won't*. She is the former curator and Slam Master of the Legendary Bowery Poetry Club. With Belize and Brooklyn embedded into her (he)art, August is motivated to speak the unsaid truth and push the boundaries of spoken word and performance to realms they've yet to live in. August's work can be found in *The BreakBeat Poets Vol. 4*. She currently resides in Los Angeles. August's previous BAM appearances include *Word. Sound. Power. 2018* (2018 Spring) and *Poetry 2013: Game Changers* (2013 Spring).

Hailing from New Orleans, **Tarriona "Tank" Ball** is the frontwoman of the Grammy-nominated group Tank and The Bangas. The four-piece group has a rare knack for combining various musical styles - fiery soul, deft hip-hop, deep-drove R&B, and subtle jazz - into one dazzling, cohesive whole that evokes the scope of New Orleans music while retaining a distinctive feel all its own. Tank and The Bangas released their major-label debut album *Green Balloon* in May 2019 and most recently released the band's follow-up EP *Friend Goals* with a host of features including PJ Morton, CHIKA, Pell, and Duckwrth to name a few. Tarriona "Tank" Ball has collaborated with acts like Mikey Hart, Norah Jones, Tayla Parx, and Jacob Collier to name a few. She had the opportunity to add her stunning vocals to the *Can You Ever Forgive Me?* (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack) on the track "I'll Be Seeing You." Tank's previous BAM appearance includes a headline performance during the 2017 BAM R&B Festival at MetroTech with Tank and the Bangas.

Lizania Cruz is a Dominican participatory artist and designer interested in how migration affects ways of being and belonging. Through research, oral history, and audience participation, she creates projects that highlight a pluralistic narrative on migration. Cruz has been an artist-in-residence and fellow at the Laundromat Project Create Change (2018-2019), Agora Collective Berlin (2018), Design Trust for Public Space (2018), Recess Session (2019), IdeasCity: New Museum (2019), Stoneleaf Retreat (2019), Robert

Blackburn Workshop Studio Immersion Project (SIP) (2019), A.I.R. Gallery (2020—2021), BRIClab: Contemporary Art (2020—2021), and Center for Books Arts (2020—2021).

Timothy DuWhite (he/they) is a Black/queer poet, actor, and activist based out of Brooklyn, NY. His essays and poetry can be found in *The Rumpus*, *The Root*, Afropunk, Black Youth Project, *The Grio*, and elsewhere. In the summer of 2018, DuWhite debuted his one-man show *NEPTUNE* as the headliner for Dixon Place's annual "Hot Festival." Following rave reviews and sold-out performances, *NEPTUNE* was then restaged as the 2019 kick-off event for Brooklyn Museum's acclaimed "First Saturday" series. DuWhite was named a "Black LGBTQ+ playwright you need to know" by *Time Out New York*. He is an alumnus of the Public Theater's #BARS program, the brainchild of actors/writers Daveed Diggs and Rafael Casal. He is a current member of the Public Theater's Emerging Writers Group 2020-2022 cohort. DuWhite is the Senior Editor at RaceBaitr.com, Program Director at NY Writers Coalition, and is represented by A3 Artist Agency for Acting & Playwriting. DuWhite is the Senior Editor at RaceBaitr.com, Program Director at NY Writers Coalition, and is represented by A3 Artist Agency for Acting & Playwriting. He is a 2020—2021 BAM Resident Artist. DuWhite's previous BAM appearances include *Word. Sound. Power. 2019* (2019 Spring) and *Essex Hemphill: Remembering and Reimagining* (2019 Spring).

Larry Ossei-Mensah uses contemporary art as a vehicle to redefine how we see ourselves and the world around us. The Ghanaian-American curator and cultural critic has organized exhibitions and programs at commercial and nonprofit spaces around the globe from New York City to Rome featuring artists such as Firelei Baez, Allison Janae Hamilton, Brendan Fernandes, Ebony G. Patterson, Modou Dieng, Glenn Kaino, Jori Minaya and Stanley Whitney to name a few. Moreover, Ossei-Mensah has actively documented cultural happenings featuring the most dynamic visual artists working today such as Derrick Adams, Mickalene Thomas, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Federico Solmi, and Kehinde Wiley.

A native of The Bronx, **Larry Ossei-Mensah** is also the co-founder of ARTNOIR, a 501(c)(3) and global collective of culturalists who design multimodal experiences aimed to engage this generation's dynamic and diverse creative class. Ossei-Mensah currently serves as Curator at Large at BAM, where he curated the inaugural exhibition *When A Pot Finds Its Purpose* featuring the work of Glenn Kaino at the Rudin Family Gallery. He will be co-curating with Omsk Social Club 7th Athens Biennale in Athens, Greece in 2021. Ossei-Mensah was named to Artnet's 2020 Innovator List. Ossei-Mensah has had recent profiles in such publications as the *New York Times*, *Artsy*, and *Cultured Magazine*, which recently named him one of seven curators to watch in 2019.

New Orleans-based singer-songwriter **PJ Morton** performs deeply soulful R&B with a passionate delivery that simultaneously comforts and entrances. A longtime keyboardist for Maroon 5 and music director for Solange, Morton boasts a roster of collaborators that include Lil Wayne, Busta Rhymes, and India.Arie. Morton's albums *Gumbo*, *Gumbo Unplugged*, and *Paul* have all earned him Grammy nominations for Best R&B Album, with additional wins for Best Traditional R&B Performance in 2019 and Best R&B Song in 2020. Morton returned to his gospel roots in 2020 with the release of his sixth self-released, self-produced, and first-ever full-length gospel project, *Gospel According to PJ*. The album is nominated for a Grammy for Best Gospel Album, marking the fourth consecutive year of Grammy nominations for Morton. His previous BAM appearance includes a headline performance during the 2018 BAM R&B Festival at MetroTech.

Sing Harlem!, originally the breakout choir for Mama Foundation for the Arts' School of Gospel, Jazz, and R&B Arts, this award-winning choir has flourished under the direction of Ahmaya Knoelle Higginson, serving as both a social impact initiative for young alumni and a commercial choir. They have performed at Lincoln Center, *Saturday Night Live*, and the Grammy Awards—among many others—and accompanied artists including Sting, Arianna Grande, and Madonna. All proceeds benefit the Mama Foundation's music training programs, which are provided to the Harlem community tuition-free.

Hank Willis Thomas is a conceptual artist working primarily with themes related to perspective, identity, commodity, media, and popular culture. His work is included in numerous public collections including the Museum of Modern Art in New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum, New York; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, and National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. His collaborative projects include *Question Bridge: Black Males, In Search Of The*

Truth (The Truth Booth), *Writing on the Wall*, and the artist-run initiative for art and civic engagement *For Freedoms*, which was awarded the 2017 ICP Infinity Award for New Media and Online Platform. Thomas is also a recipient of the Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship (2019), Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (2018), Art For Justice Grant (2018), AIMIA | AGO Photography Prize (2017), Soros Equality Fellowship (2017), and is a former member of the New York City Public Design Commission.

Jasmine Wahi is the Holly Block Social Justice Curator at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, and the Founder + Co-Director of Project for Empty Space, a Newark, NJ-based non-profit organization that supports artists who are interested in social discourse and activism. Her practice predominantly focuses on issues of femme empowerment, complicating binary structures within social discourses, and exploring multi-positional cultural identities through the lens of intersectional feminism. In 2019, Wahi joined the TED speaker family with her first TEDx talk on intersectionality and visibility, entitled *All The Women In Me Are Tired*. Wahi is a Visiting Core Critic at Yale University and a faculty member at the School of Visual Arts: MFA Fine Arts department. Wahi received her Masters in Art History from New York University's Institute of Fine Arts.

Founded in 2016, **For Freedoms** began as an investigation into how art can shape ideas, attitudes, and democratic institutions in American society. For Freedoms believes in the vital role of culture and transforming our social and political systems and that citizenship is defined by participation, not by ideology. Through anti-partisan nationwide programming, they use art as a vehicle to deepen public discussions on civic issues and core values. In essence, For Freedoms is a hub for artists, partner organizations, and citizens who want to be more engaged in public life.

Credits

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the Season Sponsor

Leadership support for off-site programs provided by the Howard Gilman Foundation

Leadership support for BAM Access Programs provided by the Jerome L. Greene Foundation

Leadership support for the BAM Hamm Archives and BAM Film, Community, and Education programs provided by The Thompson Family Foundation

Leadership support for BAM's programming and initiatives provided by Brookfield Properties; William I. Campbell & Christine Wächter-Campbell; Cheryl & Joe Della Rosa; Aashish & Dinyar Devitre; Jeanne Donovan Fisher; Roberta Garza & Roberto Mendoza; Hearst Foundations; Anne Hubbard & Harvey Schwartz; The Joseph S. and Diane H. Steinberg Charitable Trust; Robin & Edgar Lampert; Toby Devan Lewis; Diane Max & Adam E. Max (in memoriam); James I. McLaren & Lawton W. Fitt; Charina Endowment Fund; Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust; Axel Stawski & Galia Meiri Stawski; John L. & Eva Usdan; Nora Ann Wallace & Jack Nusbaum; The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust

Institutional support provided by Medgar Evers College

The BAM facilities are owned by the City of New York and benefit from public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs with support from Mayor Bill de Blasio; Cultural Affairs Commissioner Gonzalo Casals; the New York City Council including Council Speaker Corey Johnson, Majority Leader Laurie A. Cumbo, Finance Committee Chair Daniel Dromm, Cultural Affairs Committee Chair Jimmy Van Bramer, and the Brooklyn Delegation of the Council; and Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams. BAM would like to thank the Brooklyn Delegations of the New York State Assembly and New York State Senate, Brooklyn Assembly Delegation Leader Joseph R. Lentol; and New York State Senator Velmanette Montgomery.

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