



BAM Presents DanceAfrica 2021, Celebrating the Ancestral Energy of Haiti

The festive Memorial Day weekend tradition returns with virtual offerings, including an evening of premieres by HaitiDansco, Àșe Dance Theatre Collective, The Fritization Experience, Rara Tou Limen, and more, Saturday, May 29 at 7pm EDT [View Trailer Here](#)

The 44th annual celebration also includes a choreographers' conversation, a special event for teens, visual arts, FilmAfrica, the digital DanceAfrica Bazaar, and more

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the Season Sponsor

May 17, 2021/Brooklyn, NY—DanceAfrica—the nation's largest African and African Diasporic dance festival pays homage to the ancestral energy of Haiti, a metonym for Black liberation. Under the artistic direction of Abdel R. Salaam, BAM will produce a unique virtual event of dance, music, and community around the theme *Vwa zanset yo: y'ap pale, n'ap danse!*, in Haitian Creole, or "Ancestral voices: they speak...we dance!". On **Saturday, May 29 at 7pm EDT**, the highly anticipated **DanceAfrica 2021** will feature premiere performances by **HaitiDansco** (Cap Haitien, Haiti), **Rara Tou Limen** (Oakland), **Àșe Dance Theatre Collective** (Brooklyn), and **The Fritization Experience** (Brooklyn). Each company pays tribute to Haiti through traditional dance—Yanvalou Maskawon, Banda, Nago, Petro, and Parigol.

The month-long celebration also includes festival favorites and new programs providing global access to an array of performances, music, film, workshops, conversations, and more. New DanceAfrica programs include a **Choreographers' Conversation** on May 19 at 7pm with Artistic Director Abdel R. Salaam and this year's artists; a public art installation **A Return: Liberation as Power** (May 24—31), featuring six Haitian visual artists' meditation on liberation, an iteration of BAM's digital billboard-based series curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah; a special "for teens by teens" event **Haiti In Full Scope**—exploring the history, art, and culture of Haiti; and more.

Created in 1977 under Founding Elder Chuck Davis's artistic direction, DanceAfrica has evolved into a highly anticipated and high-spirited Memorial Day weekend tradition that brings together the entire community. This year the tradition is reimagined as a virtual celebration allowing audiences from around the world the opportunity to be a part of the DanceAfrica community and experience new content designed and directed for screen. Download media assets [here](#)

For press information, contact Cynthia Tate at ctate@bam.org

DanceAfrica 2021 Calendar:

- May 4—June 14 DanceAfrica Bazaar
- May 19 *DanceAfrica 2021: Choreographers' Conversation*
- May 19 Launch of *DanceAfrica Timeline* (Archives)
- May 24—31 *A Return: Liberation as Power* (Visual Art)
- May 28 —June 3 FilmAfrica
- May 28 *Haiti In Full Scope: DanceAfrica 2021 Teen Event*
- May 29 DanceAfrica Community Workshop at Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservatory
- May 29 DanceAfrica 2021 Performance - *Vwa Zanset Yo: Y'ap Pale, N'ap Danse! "Ancestral Voices: They Speak... We Dance!"*
- May 29 DanceAfrica Dance Party with DJ Hard Hittin Harry
- May 30 DanceAfrica 2021 "Community Celebration Day"
- May 31 DanceAfrica Adaptive Workshop at Mark Morris Dance Group
- May 31 DanceAfrica Master Class at Mark Morris Dance Group

For press information, contact Cynthia Tate at ctate@bam.org.

Complete list of DanceAfrica 2021 Programs and Events:

DanceAfrica 2021 Performance

Vwa Zanset Yo: Y'ap Pale, N'ap Danse! "Ancestral Voices: They Speak... We Dance!"

[View Trailer Here](#)

By Artistic Director Abdel R. Salaam

Performances by HaitiDansco (Cap-Haitien, Haiti), *Àșe Dance Theatre Collective* (Brooklyn), *The Fritization Experience* (Brooklyn), *Rara Tou Limen* (Oakland), *BAM/Restoration DanceAfrica Ensemble* (Brooklyn), and *DanceAfrica Spirit Walkers* (Brooklyn)

Sat, May 29 at 7pm EDT

[Virtual at BAM.org/danceafrica](https://www.bam.org/danceafrica)

Tickets: Pay-what-you-wish pricing \$10, \$25, \$44

(note: viewing experience is the same at each price level)

DanceAfrica 2021 pays homage to the ancestral energy of Haiti with a unique virtual event of dance, music, and community produced by BAM for its 44th celebration. The virtual evening will include four dance premieres inspired by the characteristics of the *lwa*, spirits of Haitian Vodou. DanceAfrica Artistic Director Baba Abdel R. Salaam commissioned pieces by **HaitiDansco** (Cap Haitien, Haiti), **Rara Tou Limen** (Oakland), **Àșe Dance Theatre Collective** (Brooklyn), and **The Fritization Experience** (Brooklyn). Each company pays tribute to a different *lwa* through traditional dance—Yanvalou Maskawon, Banda, Nago, Petro, and Parigol.

In Haitian tradition, the dances manifest the *lwa*, bringing messages of faith, hope, and healing, staying connected to the ancestors, and giving praise and gratitude. This year's performances embrace Haitian culture's strength, healing, and resilience through deep, rich, vibrant-colored scenes and landscapes depicting traditional dance movements, costumes, masks, headwear, and elements from the Vodou tradition. Also performing is the **BAM/Restoration DanceAfrica Ensemble**, an annual favorite and a powerful symbol of youth involvement in preserving African heritage. Many long-held traditions are reimagined, including a virtual Libation Ceremony and a Procession of the Elders that crosses the country, featuring elders from seven presenting DanceAfrica cities. Visit [BAM.org](https://www.bam.org) for more information.

DanceAfrica Digital Bazaar
Tue, May 4—Mon, June 14
BAM.org

DanceAfrica's popular free outdoor bazaar is digital this year, creating an online marketplace that highlights Black-owned independent businesses offering the finest fashion, food, jewelry, and crafts. These vendors have been part of DanceAfrica throughout the years and contribute to the vital presence of African, Caribbean, and African-American culture in Brooklyn. All proceeds go directly to these businesses—providing critical support to independent artists, artisans, and entrepreneurs. Free and open to the public.

Launch of *DanceAfrica* Timeline (Archives)
Wed, May 19 (Ongoing)
BAM.org
FREE

The DanceAfrica Timeline chronicles the history of the DanceAfrica community with a comprehensive collection of materials from the BAM Hamm Archives, including video, hundreds of photographs, programs, posters, and other materials that help tell the story of this remarkable yearly happening.

DanceAfrica 2021: Choreographers' Conversation

With Abdel R. Salaam, Dieufel Lamisere (HaitiDansco), Portsha T. Jefferson (Rara Tou Limen), Fritzlyn "Fritz" Hector (The Fritization Experience), Adia Tamar Whitaker (Àșe Dance Theatre Collective), and Thomas F. DeFrantz

Wed, May 19 at 7pm EDT
BAM.org
FREE

In conjunction with this season's virtual DanceAfrica, participating choreographers from local, national, and international companies join together to discuss how traditional Haitian forms are translated and interpreted into contemporary performance today. DanceAfrica Artistic Director and founder of DanceAfrica Spirit Walkers **Abdel R. Salaam** is joined by **Dieufel Lamisere** (HaitiDansco), **Portsha T. Jefferson** (Rara Tou Limen), **Fritzlyn "Fritz" Hector** (The Fritization Experience), and **Adia Tamar Whitaker** (Àșe Dance Theatre Collective) for this informal discussion, facilitated by **Thomas F. DeFrantz**, founding director of the Collegium for African Diaspora Dance and a professor at Duke University. The conversation will be closed captioned.

A Return: Liberation as Power (Visual Art)

Curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah

Art by Delphine Desane, M. Florine Démosthène, Mark Fleuridor, Adler Guerrier, Kathia St. Hilare, and Didier William

Mon, May 24—31, 2021

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

Haitian visual artists offer a meditation on liberation in this new public installation on the BAM sign, presented as part of DanceAfrica 2021. Inspired by Haiti's legacy as one of the first independent nations in the Western Hemisphere, BAM Curator at Large Larry Ossei-Mensah

invites these artists—and the Brooklyn community—to reflect on and draw strength from Haiti's groundbreaking history in today's calls for justice, equality, and liberation. *A Return: Liberation as Power* will be presented on the BAM sign at the corner of Lafayette and Flatbush Avenues. Visit BAM.org for more information.

FilmAfrica

FilmAfrica Co-presented by BAM & AFF, Inc.

Fri, May 28—Thu, June 3

BAM.org

BAM presents FilmAfrica, in partnership with African Film Festival, Inc, showcasing the best contemporary narrative, documentary, and short films from Africa and the diaspora. This year, in coordination with DanceAfrica's celebration of Haiti, *FilmAfrica* highlights include Raoul Peck's *Meurtre à Pacot* (2014), set in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, the film evokes the tension of Pasolini's 1968 classic *Teorema*; Eve Blouin & Raynald Leconte's *In the Eye of the Spiral* (2014) looks at the Haitian artistic and philosophical movement Spiralism, the film screens with *Real Maravilloso* (Raynald Leconte, 2018) which examines the impact of Magical Realism across Caribbean nations; Guetty Felin's *Ayiti Mon Amour* (2016) is a neorealist fable of grief and healing set five years after the devastating 2010 earthquake, and Philippe Niang's *Toussaint Louverture* (2012) depicts the slave revolt by Louverture that led to the independence of Haiti. Complete list of films at bam.org/film/2021/filmafrica

For press information on FilmAfrica, contact: Lindsay Brayton at lbrayton@bam.org

Haiti In Full Scope: DanceAfrica 2021 Teen Event

Fri, May 28 at 6pm EDT

BAM.org

[FREE](#)

Teens grades 9—12 are invited to participate in an engaging virtual exploration of Haitian history, art, and culture hosted by BAM's very own Brooklyn Interns for Art and Culture. This slumber party-themed event features a spotlight on visual art and artifacts, storytelling, and art-making, as well as presentations by teaching artists.

The Brooklyn Interns for Arts and Culture (BIAC) are a cohort of high school seniors who spend 18 months behind the scenes at BAM developing college and career readiness through a wide range of creative projects—including designing and presenting this special event just for teens.

DanceAfrica Community Workshop

Sat, May 29 at 10am EDT

Brooklyn Bridge Park Pier 6

All ages

FREE

Caregivers and children of all ages deepen their engagement with DanceAfrica in this fun-filled, hands-on workshop presented in Brooklyn Bridge Park. Veteran traditional Haitian dancer, choreographer, and teaching artist **Nadia Dieudonné** guides families through the fundamentals of Haitian movement and music. Note to participants: This is not a drop-off class; please arrive

ready and excited to engage with your family members at all times. Co-presented by BAM and Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy.

Registration is required. Free admission is based on a first-come, first-served basis. A limited number of spaces are available. Selected participants will be notified a week before the event with more detailed location information. For more information, visit [BAM.org](https://www.bam.org)

DanceAfrica Dance Party

Sat, May 29 at 8pm EDT

BAM.org

All ages

[FREE](#)

Keep the celebration going with a live, virtual dance party featuring the Afrobeat, funk, soul, rock, jazz, and hip-hop stylings of DanceAfrica with DJ Hard Hittin Harry. For more information, visit [BAM.org](https://www.bam.org)

DanceAfrica Community Day Bantaba Livestream

Sun, May 30 at 6pm EDT

[FREE](#)

Dancers from near and far come together to create DanceAfrica's first-ever Community Day Bantaba! This virtual dance performance features videos submitted by community members to showcase their dance moves and DanceAfrica spirit. DanceAfrica's Senior Council of Elders Mamma Lynette White and Baba Bill Mathews will introduce the debut event.

Participants can also join the celebration by submitting a picture to the virtual photo booth. All photos submitted on May 30 will be added to a digital mosaic that grows throughout the day, highlighting the many people who bring this festival to life. For more information, visit [BAM.org](https://www.bam.org).

DanceAfrica Adaptive Workshop

Mon, May 31 at 10am EDT

Mark Morris Dance Center

Ages 16+

\$10 virtual / \$12 in person

Acclaimed dancer, choreographer, and teacher **Pat Hall** leads this inclusive, interactive class designed for persons with disabilities. Choose to participate in person at the Mark Morris Dance Center or through livestream, and discover how African and diasporic dance forms celebrate community and aspects of daily life, providing a unique window into the culture, history, and traditions of its people. Co-presented by BAM and Mark Morris Dance Group.

For adults (ages 16 and up) with disabilities, all levels of experience welcome. When you register, we invite you to share how we can make this event as accessible to you as possible and any other information that will help us best support your experience.

Registration is required. Visit MMDG.org or contact Mark Morris Dance Center at 718.624.8400 to register. Patrons are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Dance Center's Covid-19 safety protocols before attending an in-person class. For more information, visit BAM.org.

DanceAfrica Master Class

Mon, May 31 at 12pm EDT

Mark Morris Dance Center

\$10 virtual / \$12 in person

Join veteran traditional Haitian dancer, choreographer, and teaching artist **Nadia Dieudonné** for this immersive workshop on the music and dance of Haiti, available in person at the Mark Morris Dance Center or through a livestream that brings the joy of DanceAfrica right into your home. Designed for intermediate and advanced dancers, this class introduces participants to Haitian rhythmic traditions and teaches the fundamentals of traditional movement styles. Co-presented by BAM and Mark Morris Dance Group.

Registration is required. Visit MMDG.org or contact Mark Morris Dance Center at 718.624.8400 to register. Patrons are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Dance Center's Covid-19 safety protocols before attending an in-person class. For more information, visit BAM.org.

Credits

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the Season Sponsor

Leadership support for programming in the Howard Gilman Opera House and 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 dance at BAM provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The SHS Foundation

Leadership support for BAM Film provided by the Ford Foundation

Leadership support for dance at BAM provided by The Harkness Foundation for Dance

Leadership support for BAM Visual Art provided by Toby Devan Lewis

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

Con Edison is the major sponsor of BAM Community Programs

Major support for the DanceAfrica Education Program provided by the Charles Hayden Foundation

Support for BAM Dance Education programs provided by Jody & John Arnhold.

Additional endowed support for DanceAfrica is provided by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Endowment Fund for Community, Educational, and Public Affairs Programs at BAM.

Leadership support for every season provided by the BAM Board of Trustees, led by Nora Ann Wallace, Chair & Vice Chairs William I. Campbell, Natalia Chefer, and Tim Sebuya

Leadership support for BAM's programming and initiatives provided by: Cheryl & Joe Della Rosa; Aashish & Dinyar Devitre; Robert & Mercedes Eichholz Foundation; Jeanne Donovan Fisher; Judith R. & Alan H. Fishman; Charles J. & Irene F. Hamm; The Hearst Foundation, Inc.; The Rita and Alex Hillman Foundation; Anne Hubbard & Harvey Schwartz; Robin & Edgar Lampert; Leon Levy Foundation; Diane & Adam E. Max (in memoriam); Richard & Ronay Menschel; Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust; The Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc.; The Shubert Foundation, Inc.; Axel Stawski & Galia Meiri Stawski; John L. & Eva Usdan; The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust; Alex & Ada Katz

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 also like to thank the Brooklyn Delegations of the New York State Assembly and New York State Senate.

###