BAM presents 2016 DanceAfrica Festival, May 25—30

The 39th annual celebration inaugurates Artistic Director Abdel R. Salaam’s artistic vision with reconceived staging and two debut Senegalese companies: Les Ballets de la Renaissance Africaine “WAATO SiiTA” and Compagnie Tenane, plus a special appearance by Germaine Acogny

Annual traditions return, including the Tribute to the Ancestors, a Late Night Dance Party, FilmAfrica, visual arts, and DanceAfrica Bazaar

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DanceAfrica 2016

**Senegal: Doors of Ancient Futures**
Artistic Director Abdel R. Salaam and Artistic Director Emeritus Chuck Davis

Les Ballets de la Renaissance Africaine “WAATO SiiTA” (Senegal)
Compagnie Tenane (Senegal)
Germaine Acogny (Senegal)
Dyane Harvey
Reverend Nafisa Sharriff
BAM/Restoration DanceAfrica Ensemble (Brooklyn)

Lighting design by Al Crawford
Sound design by David Margolin Lawson
Stage manager Lori Lundquist

**BAM Howard Gilman Opera House** (30 Lafayette Ave)
May 27 & 28 at 7:30pm; May 28 at 2pm; May 29 & 30 at 3pm
Tickets start at $20 (half-price for ages 16 & under)

April 13, 2016/Brooklyn, NY—DanceAfrica, BAM’s longest continuing program, enters its 39th year with new Artistic Director **Abdel R. Salaam** leading this traditional Memorial Day weekend extravaganza. DanceAfrica 2016—**Senegal: Doors of Ancient Futures** inaugurates Salaam’s artistic vision, building on founding Artistic Director **Chuck Davis’** mission to embrace the contemporary African world.
Starting with an “African village” in the Lepercq Space in 1977, Davis guided DanceAfrica into the country’s largest celebration of African dance with outposts in multiple cities.

Salaam, whose own company, Forces of Nature, has appeared in the festival eight times since 1986, is fully cognizant of that legacy. Many of the beloved DanceAfrica traditions will return, including the Tribute to the Ancestors and candlebearers. But Salaam will infuse new theatrical flair into the proceeding.

“The cultures of Africa and its diaspora are dynamic, ever evolving, and ever changing,” said Salaam. With his selection of visiting artists, he intends to show this continuation of cultures and the evolution of long-held traditions amid modern societal change.

The Dakar-based Les Ballets de la Renaissance Africaine “WAATO SiiTA” is a traditional music and dance company that has served as cultural ambassador for Senegal on several occasions since its founding in 2010. Compagnie Tenane, formed in 2007 by choreographer Simone Gomis, fuses contemporary styles like krumping, popping, and breakdance, with traditional Senegalese movement.

And as a program highlight, Salaam has invited Germaine Acogny to participate. Known as “the mother of contemporary African dance,” Acogny has been creating modern dances with African roots for 40 years. Salaam will be setting a new dance for Acogny, Dyane Harvey, and Nafisa Sharriff.

Visual arts
Complementing to the theme of showing a living tradition, BAM Visual Art presents four works from Senegalese photographer Omar Victor Diop’s from his ongoing Studio of the Vanities series. These elaborately staged portraits are part of an ongoing project that aims to shed light on the varied faces of an emerging creative class in urban Africa. Each portrait reflects a kind of creative collaboration between sitter and photographer. The photographs will be on display in the lobby of the Peter Jay Sharp Building for the duration of the DanceAfrica festival.

Community events
A Tribute to the Ancestors ceremony will be held at 10am on May 21 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.

The Memorial Day weekend celebration also includes the popular DanceAfrica outdoor Bazaar which hosts more than 150 vendors selling crafts, food, and fashion; FilmAfrica, a BAMcinématek film series at BAM Rose Cinemas; master classes for families and adults; and a Late Night Dance Party with DJ Tony Humphries at BAMcafé.

The 2016 recipients of the Samuel H. Scripps BAM Scholarship for post-secondary education will be presented with their awards on the BAM Howard Gilman Opera House stage during the festival. 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 scholarship exclusively benefits students who have participated in BAM’s arts education programs, including the DanceAfrica Education initiative.
Also planned for presentation during the festival is the first Chuck Davis Emerging Choreographer Fellowship. 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.

For press information, contact David Hsieh at dhsieh@BAM.org or 718.636.4129 x9.

**About the Artists**

*Les Ballets de la Renaissance Africaine “WAATO SiiTA”* comprises the best percussionists and dancers from Senegal: young, energetic, and dynamic artists who deeply love what they do. The company—led by Artistic Director Bouly Sonko, who headed the National Ballet of Senegal for 31 years, and choreographer and principle dancer Pape Moussa Sonko—was founded in 2010.

The dynamic Dakar-based dance troupe *Compagnie Tenane* was formed in 2007 by Simone Gomis as a creative outlet for her choreography. The company began with Gomis and her three sisters, Marie Pierre, Eveline Amie, and Marie Agnes, and has since expanded in number and repertory, which today comprises both contemporary styles and traditional Senegalese movement.

*Germaine Acogny* is known as “the mother of contemporary African dance.” She established her first dance studio in Senegal's capital, Dakar, in 1968 and has since become a major figure in African dance, blending contemporary dance with traditional African styles. She has been choreographer and artistic director of many dance companies and studios, including Mudra Afrique in Senegal and Studio-École-Ballet-Théâtre du 3è Monde in Toulouse, France. In 1997 she established L’École des Sables in Touba Dialaw, Senegal. She is also the founder of Compagnie Jant-Bi, which performed in the 2008 Next Wave festival. Born in Benin in 1944, Acogny moved to Dakar when she was six years old. Her background in traditional dance can be traced to her grandmother, a Yoruba priestess, but what makes her work significant is the way it combines contemporary dance with traditional African dance Dances to create her own unique modern African dance technique, comparable to Western dance techniques like those of Martha Graham or José Limón.

*Dyane Harvey* is a founding member of Forces of Nature Dance Theatre, led by Artistic Director Abdel R. Salaam, and has had a 45-plus year career as a dancer, teacher, and choreographer. For more than 25 years she was a principal soloist with the Eleo Pomare Dance Company, touring the US, Italy, Australia, and Nigeria as a US representative in FESTAC, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture. She has also performed with George Faison’s Universal Dance Experience, Walter Nicks’ Dance Theatre, Otis Sallid’s New Art Ensemble, Nanette Bearden’s Contemporary Chamber Dance Company, Joan Miller’s Dance Players, Dance Brazil, and the Trinidad/Tobago Repertory Dance Theatre. She served as rehearsal director for the Apollo Theatre project *Get On The Good Foot*, a celebration in dance to the music of James Brown.

*Reverend Nafisa Sharriff* is a master teacher and choreographer of traditional West African folklore from the Old Malian Empire. She met Baba Chuck Davis when she was 17 years old and went on to become a principal dancer in his company for 10 years. Throughout her illustrious 40-year career, Nafisa has performed with Stevie Wonder, Whitney Houston, Spike Lee, TC Carson, C&C Music Factory, and Kairaba West African Dance Company. Her television credits include performances on *The Richard Pryor Show, Dance Black America*, and *Positively Black*. She teaches a free traditional West African dance class in Harlem, New York where everyone is welcomed into her family of Love.
An annual favorite and symbol of youth involvement in the preservation of African heritage, the **BAM/Restoration DanceAfrica Ensemble** returns to BAM for the 19th year. Under the mentorship of Chuck Davis, the gifted young dancers of Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation 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 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 of 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**, 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 Trusts. 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 outdoor 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 28 from 12–10pm, and on May 29 & 30 from 12–8pm on Ashland Place between Hanson Place & Fulton Street and Lafayette Avenue from Rockwell Place to Fort Green Place. Admission is free and hours are subject to change.

**Late Night Dance Party**  
May 28 at 10pm  
**DJ Tony Humphries**  
BAMcafé (30 Lafayette Ave, Brooklyn)  
Tony Humphries is a veteran DJ and mastermixer best known for his stints at KISS-FM, HOT 97, and Club Zanzibar. Raised in a New York family steeped in the performing arts, his style runs eclectic and expansive. The influential, inimitable sound he cultivated at Zanzibar, now called the Jersey sound, was rooted in house music but in his hands is cleverly intertwined with soul, pop, and electronic flavors.

**DanceAfrica Workshops**  
Pape Moussa Sonko, the choreographer of WAATO SIITA company, leads two dynamic, hands-on workshops in dance and music. A family workshop for all ages will be held on Monday, May 30, from 10—11:15am, followed by an adult workshop from 12—1:30pm for those with intermediate to advanced dance experience. Family workshop fees are $10 for adults, $5 for ages 15 and under, and the adult workshop fee is $12. These classes are co-presented by BAM and MMDG. Visit [mmdg.org/school](http://mmdg.org/school) or call 718-624-8400 for details. Pre-registration is recommended.

**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 Senegal, the home of this year’s visiting companies. A special event, co-presented with Dakar Vert Environmental Film Festival, kicks off the festival with a focus on environmental issues in Africa today.

**Le Terreau de L’Espoir** (2015)  
Directed by Nicolas Cissé.  
This heartrending story—about a poet who discovers an abandoned infant in Dakar’s massive landfill—paints a portrait of one of the most fraught ecological environments in the world.  
Screened with **Mbeubeuss**. Directed by Simona Risi.  
Following the screening join a panel of leading American and African environmental experts in a discussion about environmental issues facing Africa today.  
Wed, May 25 at 7pm (110min)

**The E-Waste Tragedy** (2014)  
Directed by Cosima Dannoritzer  
This film takes viewers to Europe, China, Africa, and the US to reveal a toxic global trade fuelled by greed and corruption.  
Wed, May 25 at 9:45pm (86min)

**Lamb** (2015)  
Directed by Yared Zeleke. Starring Rediat Amare, Kidist Siyum, Welela Assefa  
This remarkable debut feature tells the story of Ephraim, a young Ethiopian boy who will do anything to save his beloved sheep.  
Thu, May 26 at 7:30pm & Fri, May 27 at 2pm (94min)
**Red Leaves** (2014)
Directed by Bazi Gete. Starring Debebe Eshetu
An Ethiopian-born immigrant man in Israel zealously chooses to retain his culture, but comes to realize that he belongs to a rapidly disappearing class. In Hebrew and Amharic with English subtitles.
Fri, May 27 at 4:30, 9:15pm (101min)

**Afrikipedia** (2014)
Directed by Teddy Goitom, Benjamin Taft, and Senay Berhe
These three documentaries from the *Afrikipedia* series examine the vibrant and rising artistic communities in Ghana, Kenya, Ivory Coast, and Senegal.
Fri, May 27 at 7pm (56min). Followed by Q&A with Eddy Goitom, Benjamin Taft, and Senay Berhe

**Sembene!** (2015)
Directed by Jason Silverman and Samba Gadjigo
This documentary of the father of African cinema Ousmane Sembene tells the remarkable story of an ordinary man who transformed himself into a fearless spokesperson for the marginalized.
Sat, May 28 at 2, 7pm (82min). Followed by Q&A with Jason Silverman and Samba Gadjigo.

**The Longest Kiss** (2013)
Directed by Alexandra Sicotte-Levesque
An intimate portrait of six Sudanese youth who travel up and down the Nile, between north and south Sudan, in search of a place to call home. In English and Arabic with English subtitles.
Sat, May 28 at 4:30pm, 9:30pm (92min). Followed by Q&A with Alexandra Sicotte-Levesque and Marcia Juzga.

**Under The Starry Sky** (2013)
Directed by Dyana Gaye. Starring Ralph Amoussou, Marème Demba Ly, Souleymane Seye Ndiaye
Three destinies cross paths between Turin, Dakar, and New York, underscoring the realities, hopes, and dreams of contemporary emigration. In French, Senegalese, and English with English subtitles.
Sun, May 29 at 4, 6, 8pm (86min)

**TGV** (1998)
Directed by Moussa Touré
A bus driver and his dozen or so passengers embark on a dangerous trip between Dakar (Senegal) and Conakry (Guinea). In Wolof and French with English subtitles.
Mon, May 30 at 2, 6:30pm (88min)

**Head Gone** (2014)
Directed by Dare Fasasi
This allegorical comedy of errors, featuring some of Nigeria’s biggest names, chronicles the travails of a bus driver who loses a group of psychiatric patients en route to a federal hospital. In English and Pidgin with English subtitles.
Mon, May 30 at 4, 8:30pm (111min)
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 BAM Howard Gilman Opera House evening performances. BAMcafé also features an eclectic mix of live music for BAMcafé Live on Friday and Saturday nights with a bar menu available starting at 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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