

BY: Senator PARKER

COMMENDING the Brooklyn Academy of Music upon the occasion of hosting its 49th Annual DanceAfrica Festival from May 16-28, 2026

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and pay tribute to those institutions of high purpose and worthy accomplishment whose enduring commitment to artistic excellence, cultural preservation, and the celebration of the African diaspora has enriched the civic and cultural life of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commend the Brooklyn Academy of Music upon the occasion of hosting its 49th Annual DanceAfrica Festival from May 16-28, 2026, with main stage performances held May 22-25 at the Howard Gilman Opera House in Brooklyn, New York; and

WHEREAS, DanceAfrica is the nation's largest festival dedicated to African and diasporic dance and music, and stands as the Brooklyn Academy of Music's longest-running program; born in Brooklyn and grown into a national institution, DanceAfrica has for nearly five decades transformed BAM and the surrounding Fort Greene neighborhood into a living gathering place for African, Caribbean, and African American artistic traditions, welcoming artists, audiences, and community members from across the world in a celebration that is at once a festival, a homecoming, and an act of cultural affirmation; and

WHEREAS, The 49th Annual DanceAfrica Festival unfolds under the theme "Uganda: Umoja/Mirembe/Obulungi - Unity, Peace, Beauty," honoring the East African nation's past, celebrating its present, and rejoicing in its future, a theme that resonates deeply within a Brooklyn community whose cultural ties to the African continent and its diaspora are woven into the very fabric of our borough's identity; and

WHEREAS, The festival is anchored by the triumphant return of Uganda's Ndere Troupe, one of Africa's most celebrated dance and music ensembles, performing on BAM's main stage for the first time since 2007, joined by Asase Yaa African American Dance Theater, celebrating their own 25th anniversary with a newly revamped presentation, alongside the DanceAfrica Spirit Walkers and the Billie's Youth Arts Academy Dance Ensemble, now in its 30th consecutive year as part of the festival; and

WHEREAS, In keeping with the sacred tradition that has opened every DanceAfrica since its founding, a libation ceremony will precede the opening performance on May 22, conducted by the DanceAfrica Council of Elders on the steps of BAM's Peter Jay Sharp Building, honoring those who have passed to the ancestral grounds and grounding the festival in the spiritual continuity that connects past, present, and future; and

WHEREAS, DanceAfrica 2026 extends far beyond the main stage,

encompassing FilmAfrica screenings curated by the African Film Festival, dance classes co-presented with the Mark Morris Dance Center, visual art installations, and community programming developed in partnership with the Billie Holiday Theatre at Restoration Plaza, Weeksville Heritage Center, the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts (MoCADA), and the Fort Greene Park Conservancy, ensuring that the festival's gifts are shared across every corner of our borough; and

WHEREAS, The beloved DanceAfrica Bazaar returns to the streets surrounding BAM on May 23-25, transforming Fort Greene into a vibrant open-air marketplace featuring more than 150 African, Caribbean, and African American artisans, designers, chefs, and entrepreneurs, embodying the festival's vision of cultural celebration as an act of community and economic empowerment; and

WHEREAS, DanceAfrica has always understood that the preservation and transmission of African diasporic culture is not merely an artistic endeavor but a political and spiritual one; an insistence, in the face of erasure, that the traditions, stories, and movement vocabularies of the African world are worthy of the grandest stages, the deepest reverence, and the widest audiences; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is proudly moved to honor the Brooklyn Academy of Music, its leadership, its artists, its cultural partners, and the community of Brooklyn that has made DanceAfrica its own for 49 extraordinary years; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend the Brooklyn Academy of Music upon the occasion of hosting its 49th Annual DanceAfrica Festival from May 16-28, 2026, and to extend congratulations to all artists, performers, vendors, educators, and community members who make this annual celebration of African diasporic culture one of the great cultural institutions of our State and Nation; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to President Tamara McCaw and the staff of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and to the artists and cultural partners of the 49th Annual DanceAfrica Festival, in recognition of their profound and enduring contribution to the cultural life of Brooklyn, New York, and the African diaspora.