Assembly Resolution No. 1168

BY: M. of A. Bronson

COMMEMORATING the 55th Anniversary of Garth Fagan Dance

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend those organizations whose purpose has been steadfast in providing cultural education, entertainment, and philanthropy in our great State; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 55th Anniversary of Garth Fagan Dance to be celebrated at a Gala on Friday, May 1, 2026; and

WHEREAS, Garth Fagan was born in Jamaica in 1940, the son of an Oxford-educated father who served as Jamaica's chief education officer; he came to the United States to study psychology at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, working with city dance students and the Detroit Contemporary Dance Company as primary dancer and choreographer; ten years later, he was on his way to New York City; and

WHEREAS, Garth Fagan Dance began in 1970 when the Nation was just beginning to emerge from a tumultuous decade of riots and widespread unrest; as part of his recent appointment to the faculty at the State University of New York at Brockport, Garth Fagan began teaching dance classes at the SUNY Educational Opportunity Center in downtown Rochester; and

WHEREAS, Many of Garth Fagan's students had no previous training, and most came from economically disadvantaged inner-city backgrounds; inspired by their raw talent, this phenomenal instructor transformed this unconventional group into a professional company, not based in a cultural capital, but in upstate New York; the company gave its first public performance in Buffalo on November 15, 1970, under the name, "Bottom of the Bucket BUT... Dance Theater"; and

WHEREAS, In 1990, Garth Fagan Dance performed for the first time at Lincoln Center, and the Garth Fagan Dance School officially opened; and

WHEREAS, The mission of Garth Fagan Dance is to create an environment in which an appreciation for dance and all of the arts is instilled and fostered; adhering to the Fagan mantra, "Discipline is Freedom," GFDS builds self-esteem and leadership skills while increasing the mental and physical strength of the students; the professional dance setting provides structure for students of all levels, especially those preparing for a career in dance; and

WHEREAS, "The Lion King" opened at the New Amsterdam Theater in New York City in 1997; the following year, Garth Fagan received the Tony Award for Best Choreography; the production has run continuously ever since, making Garth Fagan the longest-running Black choreographer on

Broadway; and

WHEREAS, What started as a hometown dance troupe has evolved into an internationally acclaimed contemporary American dance company that continuously captivates and inspires diverse audiences around the world; Garth Fagan has single-handedly made Rochester an incubator for world-class contemporary dance; and

WHEREAS, In November 2023, Garth Fagan stepped back from leadership of his company, moving into the role of Founder and Distinguished Artistic Director Emeritus; that same year, the Garth Fagan Dance Archives were acquired by the Library of Congress; and

WHEREAS, Garth Fagan has received honorary doctorates from the Juilliard School, the University of Rochester, Nazareth College, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, and, most recently, the Rochester Institute of Technology; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body joins in celebrating the rich legacy of Garth Fagan Dance this milestone year while the company continues its founding mission of creation, performance, community education, and dance training for young people of all backgrounds and draws on the grounded strength of modern dance, the vivacity of Afro-Caribbean dance, and the meticulousness of ballet; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 55th Anniversary of Garth Fagan Dance; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Garth Fagan Dance.