



BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC PETER JAY SHARP BUILDING 30 LAFAYETTE AVENUE BROOKLYN, NY 11217—1486

BAM hosts the 39th Annual Brooklyn Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The 2025 Tribute Features a Keynote Address by Civil Rights Icon Carlotta Walls LaNier the Youngest Member of the Little Rock Nine, a Performance by Ailey II's Kiri Moore, and The Fire Ensemble Led by Troy Anthony

Family-Friendly Activities and a Film Screening Continue the Celebration of Dr. King's Impact

Presented by BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music) and Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso

39th Annual Brooklyn Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House
30 Lafayette Ave. Brooklyn, NY

Jan 20, 2025, at 10:30am EST

FREE (BAM lobby will open at 8am; seating is on a first-come, first-seated basis)

January 7, 2025 / Brooklyn, NY— BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music) and Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso are proud to present the **39th Annual Brooklyn Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**, New York City's largest celebration honoring the life and legacy of Dr. King. Featuring a keynote address by civil rights icon **Carlotta Walls LaNier**, a powerful solo by **Ailey II** dancer **Kiri Moore**, and an intergenerational performance by **The Fire Ensemble**, this free annual event will take place on **Monday, January 20, 2025, at 10:30am** in BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House (Peter Jay Sharp Building, 30 Lafayette Ave.), bringing together artists, activists, and community leaders to honor Dr. King's enduring message of justice and unity.

This year's keynote address will be delivered by **Carlotta Walls LaNier**, a civil rights icon who, at just 14 years old, became the youngest member of the Little Rock Nine. Her courage in desegregating Central High School in 1957 marked a turning point in American history. In her inspirational speech, Ms. LaNier will reflect on her journey and encourage audiences to stay vigilant in the fight for equality, reminding us of the power of resilience and collective action.

The Tribute will also feature an excerpt from *Divining*, performed by **Kiri Moore** of **Ailey II**, honoring Dr. King's legacy through the transformative power of dance. *Divining* is a landmark 1984 work choreographed by the late Judith Jamison, a trailblazing figure in modern dance and former artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. In her autobiography *Dancing Spirit*, Jamison described *Divining* as "mysterious, its title suggesting a search or quest"—a theme that profoundly resonates with Dr. King's journey toward justice and equality.

Adding to the inspirational program is a stirring performance by **The Fire Ensemble**, an intergenerational choir community led by founding creative director and composer **Troy Anthony**. Centering BIPOC and queer voices, The Fire Ensemble blends gospel, soul, and musical theater traditions to create music that uplifts and unites. In the spirit of unity and inclusion, the choir welcomes public participation, inviting community members to lend their voices and join in this powerful celebration of Dr. King's legacy. For more information on how to participate in the Tribute with The Fire Ensemble visit [BAM.org](https://bam.org).

In addition to the Tribute, BAM will offer free events throughout the day to continue celebrating Dr. King's impact. BAMkids will present ***If You Can't Be the Sun, Be a Star!***, a family-friendly program co-curated with the BAMkids Parent Advisory Circle. This event features interactive activities such as mural-making, a vintage photo booth, and movement workshops, all designed to inspire creativity, collaboration, and reflection on Dr. King's life and mission.

At 1pm, BAM Rose Cinemas will screen ***Ernest Cole: Lost and Found***, a documentary introducing audiences to the groundbreaking work of Ernest Cole, a South African photographer who captured life under apartheid. This screening reintroduces his powerful legacy to new generations and sparks meaningful conversations about justice and resilience.

As part of this year's celebration of Dr. King, sisters **Itiya Mason** and **Amalya Mason**, current BAM Education participants and ensemble members of BAM's Arts & Justice program, will serve as **Citizens Youth Speakers**. These young women represent the transformative power of arts education in amplifying youth voices and inspiring the next generation of changemakers. Their participation reflects BAM's and **Citizens'** shared commitment to nurturing leadership and creativity while honoring Dr. King's legacy of advocacy and hope.

This free annual event is open to all. Tribute tickets will be distributed on a first-come, first-seated basis starting at 8am in the BAM Howard Gilman Opera House lobby. For more information, visit [BAM.org](https://bam.org).

[High-Resolution Images](#)

Media Inquiries for interviews and attendance: Please contact Cynthia Tate at ctate@bam.org or 718.724.8022.

ADDITIONAL EVENTS

BAMkids Celebrates MLK Day

If You Can't Be the Sun, Be a Star!

Co-curated by the BAMkids Parent Advisory Circle

The Adam Space (30 Lafayette Ave.) Brooklyn, NY

Jan 20 at 11:45am, 1:30 & 3pm

Ages 6+

FREE ([Registration required](#))

This family friendly program, co-curated with the BAMkids Parent Advisory Circle, immerses young people in art forms that express the importance of acts of service and collaborative work, while knowing that your best doesn't have to look like anyone else's. Activities include imaginative movement, creating a collaborative tape mural, celebrating friendship and family in a vintage photo booth, and sharing inspirational messages. Guided by a diverse group of artists, kids will express creativity and build community, while learning about Dr. King's life and mission. For more information visit [BAM.org](https://bam.org)

Community Movement - Shine Bright: Be the Star You Are!

11:45am, 1:30 & 3pm

Using the famous 1967 speech “If You Can’t Be the Sun, Be a Star,” artists Adia Whitaker and Jashua Sa-Ra will guide children in exploring creative ways to express these uplifting phrases.

A King's Quest: Fact Finding Fun about Dr. King

11:45am, 1:30pm & 3pm

Explore Dr. King’s humanity, complexity, and wide-reaching influence through a learning adventure that uses clues to reveal fascinating facts.

CommUNITY Tape Mural: Creating the Stars Together

Ongoing throughout each session

In an activity inspired by Dr. King’s message about the power in collective activity, Parent Advisor and artist Kyung Jeon Miranda invites participants to join in creating a collaborative tape mural.

Capture the Moment: Vintage Star Booth

Ongoing throughout each session

Aspiring to Dr. King’s words about connection, families are invited to celebrate love, friendship, and family by capturing a timeless moment together in a beautiful vintage photo booth created by Jasiri Kafele.

Spread the Spark!

In partnership with City Harvest

Ongoing throughout each session

Share an inspirational message to seniors and community organizations in the spirit of Dr. King’s message about “the Eternal principles of beauty, love, and justice.”

Activity Station

Ongoing throughout each session

Heeding Dr. King’s call to use time creatively, sit down with a BAMkids activity sheet and take a BAMkids MLK Day tote bag to decorate in response to the prompt “If You Can’t Be the Sun, Be a Star.”

Film Screening

Ernest Cole: Lost and Found (2024)

Dir. Raoul Peck (105 min)

Featuring LaKeith Stanfield as the voice of Ernest Cole

BAM Rose Cinemas (30 Lafayette Ave), Brooklyn, NY

Jan 20 at 1pm

Free (tickets will be distributed on a first-come basis)

This new documentary by Oscar-nominated filmmaker Raoul Peck (*I Am Not Your Negro*) chronicles the life and work of Ernest Cole, one of the first Black freelance photographers in South Africa. His early pictures, shocking when they were first published, revealed to the world Black life under apartheid. Cole fled South Africa in 1966 and lived in exile in the US, photographing extensively in New York City and the American South. *House of Bondage*, his landmark book of photographs denouncing apartheid, cemented his place at age 27 as one of the great photographers of his time. *Ernest Cole: Lost and Found* tells Cole’s story through his own writings, recollections of those closest to him, and the lens of his uncompromising work, reintroducing a pivotal Black artist to a new generation.

About the speakers and artists

In 1957, fourteen-year-old Carlotta Walls became the youngest member of the Little Rock Nine, courageously helping to desegregate Central High School amidst violent opposition. Her historic journey challenged systemic racism and forever changed the social landscape of America. **Carlotta Walls LaNier** is the author of *A Mighty Long Way: My Journey to Justice at Little Rock Central High School* and serves as president of the Little Rock Nine Foundation, which promotes equality of opportunity in education.

A recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal and the NAACP's Spingarn Medal, she has been inducted into the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame, the National Women's Hall of Fame, and Girl Scouts Women of Distinction. A sought-after speaker, Ms. LaNier inspires audiences nationwide to reflect on the lessons of history and remain vigilant in the fight for equality.

Ailey II—the second company of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater—is universally renowned for merging the spirit and energy of the country's best early-career dance talent with the passion and creative vision of today's most outstanding and emerging choreographers. Founded in 1974 as a bridge between The Ailey School and the professional dance world, Ailey II embodies Alvin Ailey's pioneering mission to establish an extended cultural community that provides dance performances, training, and community programs for all people. Ailey II flourished into one of the most popular dance companies in the country under the leadership of Sylvia Waters from 1974–2012, combining a rigorous touring schedule with extensive community outreach programs. With Artistic Director Francesca Harper at the helm, Ailey II is forging a new path for modern dance—one that's inclusive, experimental, and transformative.

Troy Anthony is a Kentucky-born composer, director, and theater-maker based in NYC rigorously practicing Black queer joy. He is the Founding Creative Director of Fire Ensemble Inc., where he focuses on the intersection between music theater, community practice, and social justice. He has presented work at 54 Below, JACK, Joe's Pub, Prospect Theater Company, and Rattlestick Playwrights Theater. Commissions include 5th Avenue Theater, The Civilians, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, The Public Theater, St. Louis Rep, and The Shed, where he just completed a three-year residency. Troy has over 15 years of experience in youth and community development work with organizations such as the Kentucky Center's Governor's School for the Arts, the Vermont Governor's Institute on the Arts, and the Public Theater. He was the first Director of Legacy and Internship Programs at the DreamYard Project in the Bronx, where he focused on the importance of emerging leadership.

Fire Ensemble Inc. is a community-centered production company that creates revolutionary new work rooted in music, ritual, and revelation by gathering through choirs that foster collective liberation. At the center of the company is The Fire Ensemble, an intergenerational pop-up choir community that centers BIPOC and queer folk who rehearse, workshop, and perform in transformative large-scale music theater works and rituals rooted in predominantly Black musical styles including gospel, R&B, and musical theater. Although performances are moments of culmination and expand the circle of sharing, the emphasis of our projects are on the process, and the space of community that is built through gathering.

Brooklyn born and raised, **Hector Arias**—also known as Hectah—is an artist, husband, and dad. He spent a decade at Mass Appeal as a senior animator and art director. He has contributed to several projects, including Showtime's *Wu-tang Clan: of Mics and Men*, Netflix's *Rapture*, PBS's *Nas: Live at the Kennedy Center*, and CNN's *Fresh Dressed*. His most recent work is as an animator on Apple+ TV's *Louis Armstrong's Black & Blues*, which earned him a Cinema Eye Honors nomination for visual design. He was also a teaching artist for award winning non-profits including El Puente, Art-Start, and Americorp's Public Allies. Hectah joined the BAMkids Parent Advisory Circle in 2022.

East Flatbush native **David C. Brown** is a producer and writer with credits for Netflix, Hulu, Starz, ESPN+, Viceland, VH1 and more. He received two Sports Emmys for NBC's coverage of the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games and a Daytime Emmy for Outstanding Lifestyle Program for *Sparking Joy with Marie Kondo*. The 2024 MGM+ series *Hollywood Black*, about the history of Black filmmakers, is a professional and personal highlight, premiering at the Tribeca Film Festival. David is an alumnus of Boston University and a member of Alpha Phi

Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated via Sigma Chapter, the same chapter Dr. King was initiated into in 1952. He is humbled and proud to celebrate the humanity, legacy, and vision of this great man. David joined the BAMkids Parent Advisory in 2024.

Jasiri Kafele (Brooklyn, NY) is an artist and painter known for blending abstract expressionism with vibrant, emotive color palettes. With a decades long expansive background, creating masterpieces for his clients, through bold brushstrokes and textured surfaces. Drawing inspiration from both classical and modern art movements, Jasiri's work invites viewers to experience a deeper connection to the emotions and stories conveyed on canvas. His art has been previously featured on stage in BAM's DanceAfrica.

Sonya Freeman-Minnis is an actress, brand ambassador, and mom based in East New York, Brooklyn. Originally from Chicago, where she studied speech and drama at Harold Washington College, she's now known as the person to call if you want to find out what events are going on in New York City. Minnis' passion is advocating for a future of sustainability in fashion. She is committed to encouraging second-hand shopping, upcycling, reusing, reducing, and recycling. Minnis can be found at the latest NYC immersive experience with her daughter or shooting the latest SAG-AFTRA production at an NY film studio. Sonya joined BAMkids Parent Advisory in 2022.

Kyung Jeon-Miranda is a Brooklyn-based artist known for her vibrant paintings that explore themes of identity, motherhood, and social justice. Drawing from personal experiences, her work reflects a deep commitment to storytelling and advocacy, blending whimsical imagery with thought-provoking narratives. With a passion for using art to spark awareness and change, Kyung's practice highlights the intersections between creativity, lived experience, and cultural dialogue. Kyung joined the BAMkids Parent Advisory Circle in 2020.

Jashua Sa-Ra is an award-winning performance poet, author, event producer, host, lecturer, playwright, educator, graphic designer, and percussionist. He has produced and hosted several critically acclaimed performance events, including a festival in Brooklyn, NY, concerts, open mic venues, showcases, slams, and a variety of special events. He has published two CD's and a DVD of his poetry, two books of poetry, and four math books.

Adia Tamar Whitaker, Artistic Director of the 24-year old Brooklyn based dance theater ensemble Àşę Dance Theater EAST and the 15-year old Bay Area based dance theater ensemble Àşę Dance Theater WEST, has performed contemporary dance, vernacular movement, Afro-Haitian, and Haitian dance in the U.S. and abroad for 22 years. Whitaker has traveled to Haiti, Cuba, Brazil, France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ghana, Jamaica, Trinidad, Tobago, and Antigua to study, perform, and teach dance. Whitaker received an MFA in Dance from Hollins University, a BA in Dance from San Francisco State University, and attended The Ailey School. She was an Urban Bush Women Apprentice, a Maggie Allesee Choreographic Fellow, and an Isadora Duncan Award recipient. In 2019, Whitaker's company performed at ODC, and she received the NYSCA/NYFA Award in Choreography and completed her first residency at the Kennedy Center. In 2021, Whitaker's choreography was featured in the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Virtual DanceAfrica, and she completed a second residency at the Kennedy Center, and became a Gerbode Foundation Special Awards in the Arts Grant recipient and a curatorial artist for Albany Symphony Orchestra and Brooklyn Children's Museum. In 2022, Whitaker and Dance Mission Theater received a Kenneth Rainin Foundation New Program Grant. In 2023, Adia was awarded a Brooklyn Arts Council Creative Equations Fund Justice, Equity, Sustainability, + Performing Arts Grant and a NEFA National Dance Project Production and Touring Grant.

City Harvest is New York's first and largest food rescue organization, collecting perfectly good food that would otherwise go to waste and delivering it—free of charge—to hundreds of food pantries, soup kitchens, and community partners across the five boroughs. This year, City Harvest will rescue and distribute more than 81 million pounds of nutritious food to New Yorkers experiencing food insecurity. Learn more at www.cityharvest.org.

Credits:

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the Season Sponsor

Leadership support for BAM's strategic initiatives provided by Mellon Foundation

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

Leadership support for BAM programming provided by Howard Gilman Foundation

Leadership support for BAM's strategic initiatives provided by Altman Foundation

Leadership support for virtual programming at BAM provided by the Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Foundation

Citizens is the Lead Sponsor of The 39th Annual Brooklyn Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Leadership support for BAM Film and Community programs provided by The Thompson Family Foundation

Major support for programs in the Lepercq Cinema is provided by The Lepercq Charitable Foundation

Leadership support for every season provided by the BAM Board of Trustees, led by Diane L. Max, Chair & Vice Chairs Natalia Chefer and Tim Seburnya

Leadership support for BAM's programming and initiatives provided by: brigittenyc; William I. Campbell & Christine Wächter-Campbell; Jeanne Donovan Fisher; Judith R. & Alan H. Fishman; The Ford Foundation; The Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc.; The Harkness Foundation for Dance; The Rita and Alex Hillman Foundation; Alex Katz Foundation; Robin & Edgar Lampert; Adam E. Max (in memoriam) & Diane L. Max; Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust; The SHS Foundation; The Shubert Foundation, Inc.; Axel Stawski & Galia Meiri Stawski; John L. & Eva Usdan; Anonymous

Major support for BAM's programming and initiatives provided by: Andrea Bozzo & John Martinez; Cheryl & Joe Della Rosa; The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation; Aashish & Dinyar Devitre; Mark Diker & Deborah Colson; Epstein Teicher Philanthropies; The FAR Fund; Barry M. Fox; Roberta Garza & Roberto Mendoza; Gotham Organization, Inc.; Anne Hubbard; Humana; The Emily Davie & Joseph S. Kornfeld Foundation; Scott C. McDonald; The Ambrose Monell Foundation; Barbara & Richard Moore; Darnell-Moser Charitable Fund; Henry and Lucy Moses Fund, Inc; Eri Nishikawa; PM The Przymusinski Fund; The Jerome Robbins Foundation, Inc.; The Morris and Alma Schapiro Fund; Dr. Sheila A. Cain & Bart Sheehan; Jennifer Small & Adam Wolfensohn; Edward and Virginia Spilka; Starry Night Fund; Doug C. Steiner; Joseph A. Stern; Tiger Baron Foundation; Joseph LeRoy and Ann C. Warner Fund

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 Eric Adams; the New York City Council including Council Speaker Adrienne E. Adams, Councilmember Crystal Hudson, and the Brooklyn Delegation of the Council; and Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso. BAM would also like to thank the Brooklyn Delegations of the New York State Assembly and New York State Senate, Assemblymember Phara Souffrant Forrest, and Senator Andrew Gounardes. BAM is also grateful for the leadership of Senate Majority Leader Charles D. Schumer, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Representative Nydia M. Velazquez, and Representative Daniel S. Goldman.

###