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**BARUCH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER (BPAC)
CELEBRATES THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF AKILA WORKSONGS
WITH AN AFTERNOON OF SPOKEN WORD, LIVE MUSIC, DRAMA, & DANCE**
*Some of NYC's Most Revered Performing Artist Come Together
For An Off-Broadway Showcase on Arts and Activism: **December 16, 2012***

New York, New York - - **Baruch Performing Arts Center (BPAC)** will present a special afternoon of poetry/spoken word, music, dance, and drama in conjunction with **AKILA WORKSONGS, Inc.** (AKILA) on Sunday, December 16, 2012 at 2:30pm. **John Malatesta**, Managing Director of BPAC (a major performing arts center for the New York City metropolitan area) and **April R. Silver** of AW (a communications agency that specializes in cultural arts and social justice traditional and new media campaigns) will collaborate to produce this special Off-Broadway showcase entitled *Elevating: 20 Years of Arts and Activism. Live!* While being aligned with BPAC's mission and functioning to celebrate the 20th anniversary of AKILA, the multi-genre performance collage will feature some of NYC's most respected performing and visual artists. Confirmed performers, in alphabetical order, are:

- **Camille A. Brown** - Award-winning choreographer for the Broadway revival of *A Streetcar Named Desire*; Artistic Director, Camille A. Brown and Dancers
- **Kelly Zen-Yie Tsai** – Poet, author, 3x feature on *Russell Simmons' Def Poetry Jam*
- **Masauko Chipembere** of Blk Sonshine - internationally acclaimed singer and songwriter
- **Mo Beasley** – Award-winning poet, playwright, and actor
- **Pyeng Threadgill** – Award-winning jazz vocalist and composer
- **Ras Baraka** – Poet, educator, and author; Principal, Central High School (Newark, NJ)
- **Safiya Washington** - Poet, *Philadelphia Youth Poetry Movement* alumni and 2011 National *Brave New Voices* Grand Slam Poetry Champion
- **Toni Blackman** – Internationally acclaimed performance artist; the first Hip Hop Cultural Envoy/Musical Ambassador of the US State Department

The host and DJ are comedian **MK Lewis** and **DJ Lumumba**, respectively. See website and Twitter

- more -

directory below. General admission is \$25. Admission for *Access AKILA* members is \$20; \$10 for college students (with proper ID). Tickets go on sale today at www.web.ovationtix.com/trs/pe/9732998 (or <http://bit.ly/elevatingtickets>) and at the BPAC box office. For ticket information, call 646.312.5073. For program information, call 718.756.8501 or email pr@akilaworksongs.com. Program subject to change.

Behind and Beyond *Elevating*

Malatesta shares his vision as Executive Producer and Presenter of *Elevating: 20 Years of Arts and Activism, Live!* (aka *Elevating*): “I want to tap into the great talent of NYC poets, performing arts, musicians, and dancers and present a full evening of their work. As the director of a Manhattan-based performing arts center, I constantly meet incredibly talented performers and I want to give them work that I can present to the Baruch community and general public.”

Silver, a social entrepreneur, activist, and writer who founded AKILA WORKSONGS in 1993, added this: “*Elevating* is a performance showcase, yes, but it’s also much deeper. My desire is to epitomize, via a carefully threaded live show, the essence of what we believe in as a company. The showcase is my creative, symbolic way of saying *thank you* to “arts and activism” community members for the sacrifices they make to tell the truth. I’m overjoyed that we have an institution like BPAC that respects my vision and is willing to invest in it. We couldn’t ask for a better presenter.”

Leslie “ButtaFlySoul” Taylor is an experienced director who is also known for his performance poetry and has been selected as the Director of *Elevating*. “The philosophy and the passion of AKILA WORKSONGS will be reflected in this showcase as a way to honor the philosophy and the passion of its clients and constituents. My role is to weave together one unified story based on many dynamic stories; to show the audience the best of who they are and who they aspire to be via ten amazing artists.”

About BPAC

The mission of Baruch Performing Arts Center (BPAC) is to serve the Baruch College community by inserting the performing arts into all aspects of Baruch College life, including the interests of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni. As part of the Weissman School of Arts & Sciences, the center achieves this goal through performing arts programming and allied activities that support and enrich the educational curriculum throughout the college, as well as opening new areas of interest to promote the growth of students as individuals educated for life as well as work, while encouraging the faculty, staff, alumni and general public to become engaged as audience and supporters. BPAC also serves as a major performing arts center for the New York City metropolitan area with an official off-Broadway venue, a recital hall, auditorium, and black box. Two plays have evolved into Broadway productions from BPAC.

About AKILA WORKSONGS

AKILA WORKSONGS is a communications agency that specializes in *arts and activism*, a phrase popularized by founder April R. Silver. The agency offers public and media relations; online marketing (email, social media, mobile); event planning, marketing, and production services. Its distinguished client and relationship rosters (individuals and groups) have included luminaries such as **Sonia Sanchez, Amiri and Amina Baraka, Nana Camille Yarbrough, Ras Baraka, Sister Souljah, Doug E. Fresh, Sean**

Combs, Chuck D., asha bandele, Toni Blackman, UNIVERSES, Rosa Clemente, JLove Calderon, Erica Ford, Kevin Powell, Mo Beasley, Byron Hurt, Alex Bugnon, Tulani Kinard, Iyanla Vanzant, Marcella Runell Hall, Marc Lamont Hill, Adesola Osakalumi, Yasiin Bey (formerly Mos Def), Talib Kweli, and many others.

It has also serviced or collaborated with a number of highly respected community-based and non-profit organizations; cultural arts institutions; and corporate and philanthropic entities since 1993, including **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Museum of Natural History, Apollo Theater, Center for Black Literature, Center for Law and Social Justice, Comedy Central, Ford Foundation, Fort Greene Festival, HarlemStage/Aaron Davis Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Mott Foundation, New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Playwrights Horizons, Public Theater, Romare Bearden Foundation, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and various others.**

Sponsors, media, and promotional partners for *Elevating* and for other AKILA WORKSONGS anniversary signature events will be announced soon. For general information, call 718.756.8501, email pr@akilaworksongs.com, or follow @akilaworksongs (#elevatingakila #akilaat20 #artsandactivism). Also follow @BaruchPAC. To request a media interview with Mr. Malatesta, Ms. Silver, or any of the *Elevating* Artists, contact Lea Byrd at lea@akilaworksongs.com or call 718.756.8501 office.

Learn more about the *Elevating* artists online!

Camille A. Brown

(dance)

www.camilleabrown.org
@camilleAbrown

DJ Lumumba

www.lumumbabandele.com
@lumumbabandele

Kelly Zen-Yie Tsai

(poetry)

www.yellowgurl.com
@yellowgurlpoet

Masauko Chipembere

(music)

www.blksonshine.com
@blksonshine

MK Lewis

(Host)

www.youtube.com/FunnyMamaMK
@mklewis610

Mo Beasley

(drama)

www.facebook.com/mobeasleypage
@mobeasleyspeaks

Pyeng Threadgill

(music)

www.pyeng.com
@pyengthreadgill

Ras Baraka

(poetry and reflections)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1zEd9bjHpY
@rasbaraka

Safiya Washington

(poetry)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=usfrwI4-LP4
@honestly_safi

Toni Blackman

(poetry)

www.toniblackman.com
@toniblackman