



May 24, 2017

Tom Finkelppearl
Commissioner
Department of Cultural Affairs
31 Chambers Street, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Tom:

The staff of the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) was delighted to review the proposals and feedback you recently posted for the CreateNYC Cultural Plan. We are excited to work with you to implement many of the ideas you have shared, and to continue the work we have been doing that meets many of the goals you have presented. At a time of national tumult and change, it is more important than ever for New York City to be a beacon of creativity and culture, and for cultural institutions to work with the City to promote equity, access, and diversity in arts and culture.

BAM's staff and audience alike have enjoyed participating in the CreateNYC planning process. We surveyed participants at many of our events, including Senior Cinema. We also encouraged our audience to complete the online surveys and attend workshops. Thank you for creating opportunities for our staff and audience to engage directly with the City during this important process.

Several proposals that were posted are of great interest to BAM, and are areas we look forward to expanding in. Below please find some ideas about each of the eight issue areas that were identified.

- Equity
 - BAM has participated in professional development and capacity building workshops for smaller organizations. With further support from DCLA, we hope to continue this work, as well as the work of training our own staff in diversity, equity, inclusion and unconscious bias awareness.
 - One of the desired impacts of the BAM Strong renovation project is to update existing amenities that address functional and operational needs to improve site accessibility and enhance the experience of BAM's audience and artists. The Harvey Theater outer lobby will be renovated to replace the existing balcony stair with a new grand stair that democratizes access to the theater, to create an elevator to improve general access to all floors of the theater, and to create a new, modern box office that is more open, functional, and accessible to the public. New flooring will also be built with appropriate ramps and

landings to meet today's accessibility standards. The construction of a brand new elevator will transform the Harvey into an accessible and welcoming space for all of our constituents. Providing access for New Yorkers with disabilities is a goal that BAM is proud to pursue.

- BAM is a proud participant in the IDNYC program, leading the way in the cultural field since the program's inception. We were the first to institute online IDNYC membership enrollment and boast IDNYC membership. Since January 2015, BAM has enrolled over 23,000 members through the IDNYC Program.
- We look forward to continuing the important work of providing access to all New Yorkers, including immigrants.

- Social and Economic Impact
 - For over a decade, BAM has run an intensive internship program, *Brooklyn Interns for Arts and Culture*, annually providing a total of nine to twelve high school students from underserved communities with career support and access to high-quality exposure to the arts.
 - We also provide paid internships for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as those with advanced degrees, in many BAM departments.
 - Also worth mentioning is our new BAM Apprentices in Stagecraft program, which BAM launched this year through a grant from the New York City Theater Subdistrict Council. This program aims to securely place individuals from underrepresented communities on a career path in the stagehand and production management fields. Through intensive training and hands-on work experience, participants will be able to establish themselves within a professional network, while also helping to increase diversity in the field.
 - BAM participated in the Social Impact of the Arts (SIAP) study and is using the findings in our planning and strategy going forward. We were delighted to learn from this study that the neighborhoods surrounding BAM boast the highest cultural participation in the City.
 - BAM is a strong proponent of ongoing professional development and the support of cultural workers' wages in New York City. BAM's competitive compensation packages are designed to not only retain dedicated and thriving employees but to ensure equity within the organization.
 - Additionally, BAM works to be as environmentally friendly as possible. Both of our in-progress capital projects, the BAM Karen and BAM Strong, will meet or exceed LEED requirements. The BAM Fisher, which was completed in 2012, exceeded the LEED requirements by earning LEED Gold status. BAM is committed to pursuing sustainability and good place-making concepts on all of its new construction and renovation projects, for the benefit of both our audiences and our surrounding community.

- Affordability

- BAM has hosted affordable housing workshops and works to provide our staff and cultural sector colleagues with as much information as possible regarding affordable housing.
 - A third of performance tickets cost \$35 or less.
 - In FY17, BAM has doubled its Ticket Assistance Program, which provides free tickets to local and underserved communities through a variety of nonprofit agencies.
 - BAM also offers low priced community rental rates for cultural and community groups, as well as low cost rehearsal space for artists.
 - Opened in 2012, the BAM Fisher served a longstanding institutional need: a small and flexible 3rd theater, enabling a greater variety of programming, particularly new and emerging artists who could not be booked in the larger theaters. Its design responded to BAM's needs as well as to surveys of the local community, featuring low-cost rental options for NYC arts organizations, a space for increased family and education programs, and affordable tickets for all audiences. All tickets are priced at \$25 for BAM presentations, with even lower prices for children's shows.
 - Once a month, BAM's cinemas are filled with seniors enjoying a free movie and concessions, just one of the many ways BAM partners with organizations like senior centers to provide free and low-cost programming to underserved communities. Our nearly decade old Senior Cinema program, as well as the newly added Senior Socials and Senior Brush and Brunch events, engage nearly 6,000 seniors a year, providing access to lifelong learning and socialization.
- Citywide Coordination
 - BAM is eager to partner more frequently with our neighbors at the NYCHA Ingersoll Houses. We recognize that providing cultural opportunities for underserved New Yorkers is some of the most important work we have to do. The support of the DCLA in our efforts going forward would be very welcome, and BAM is happy to work with other City agencies on new initiatives. This proposal is especially timely and meaningful- we hope to be at the forefront of this initiative.
- Arts, Culture, and Science Education-
 - BAM currently offers diverse arts and culture education, including free after-school programs like our renowned *Arts and Justice* program, where students examine the intersections of social justice and the arts through workshops in theater and creative writing led by BAM teaching artists. Participants explore important issues affecting their communities while developing artistic, decision-making, and critical thinking skills. The program culminates in an original theater piece created and performed by the students for friends and family at the BAM Fisher.
 - BAM also offers opportunities for NYC public school students to attend live performances and screenings, as well as virtual programming.

- In-school opportunities for students and teachers include *Brooklyn Reads*. Created exclusively for Brooklyn high schools, this spoken word program is designed to build students' literacy through creative writing, poetry analysis, and individual performance. Teaching artists for the program, professionals in the world of spoken word, mentor participants toward a final in-school presentation of their original work.
 - The Black Male Achievement Project (BMAP) is an in-school program for high school age young men of color that combats the disproportionately low high school graduation and college matriculation rates among this demographic. BMAP engages young men in a curriculum focused on writing, research, and critical thinking. In FY17, BMAP expanded BMAP from a single-semester program to a year-round initiative at the Cultural Academy for the Arts and Sciences. BMAP will again implement BMAP as a year-round program in FY18.
 - Based on the BMAP model, BMAP will develop a new program which will engage underserved young women of color. This program is scheduled to launch in spring semester of FY18 and will serve 25 students in its pilot year.
 - BMAP welcomes the opportunity to expand our educational offerings, especially to underserved districts and students. We engage over 34,000 students a year, but with the assistance of the City will be able to do even more.
- Health of the Cultural Sector
 - BMAP is located in the flourishing Brooklyn Cultural District, home to over 70 cultural organizations and diverse stakeholders committed to creating an ecosystem that has a positive economic and cultural impact. BMAP is a proud leader of the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance (DBAA.) While BMAP is by far the largest institution of the 39 arts and cultural member organizations, we derive value from collaborating with our colleagues and providing guidance to smaller, newer organizations. BMAP knows that the health of our cultural district is as important for our own organization as it is for the City.
 - BMAP will be collaborating with, 651 Arts, the Brooklyn Public Library, and MoCADA when we are neighbors at the new Brooklyn Cultural District "South Site" next year. We hope to become a model of cooperative collaboration and community focused programming, drawing on our shared interests and location.
 - We offer advertising space to other cultural organizations in our marketing efforts and work to support artists in our community with rehearsal space at low cost rates and guidance, whenever possible.
 - BMAP has partnered with Greenlight Bookstores for almost four years. This initiative began as Greenlight opened their first independent store in Fort Greene. Greenlight operates two kiosks from BMAP's venues. Greenlight also partners with BMAP on an Unbound Book Launch series which helps promote titles from an array of authors, especially NYC-based personalities. BMAP understands that local businesses,

especially arts-based ones, help to make our neighborhood vibrant and dynamic.

- Arts and Culture in Public Space
 - BAM works closely with artists, the City, and the design and construction community to find ways to include outstanding art in its renovations and new construction projects wherever possible. Artwork that enriches BAM's buildings, such as the Leo Villareal lights on BAM's flagship Peter Jay Sharp Building, or work that enhances the neighborhood, such as the KAWS mural on Lafayette Avenue are both examples of BAM leading the way in public art design and commissioning. In fact, BAM is poised to make a significant investment in public art, throughout the neighborhood and across our campus.
 - Since 2014, BAM has partnered with the Fulton Area Business (FAB) Alliance, to present FAB Flicks—a free outdoor film series, at the Putnam Triangle Plaza, curated by BAMcinématek. FAB Flicks brings together residents and local businesses in Clinton Hill and Bedford-Stuyvesant, transforming the Fulton Street commercial corridor into a fun cultural destination for locals and neighbors alike.
 - BAM has brought the R&B Festival at MetroTech—a lunchtime concert series, outdoors and free of charge—to the MetroTech Commons for more than two decades. R&B, funk, gospel, soul, jazz, and world music emerging voices and established artists perform for MetroTech workers and passersby. This year, the festival will continue to present the work of innovative artists with 10 free outdoor concerts from June through August.
 - The BAM Karen, the latest addition to the BAM campus, will be part of a cultural space located in the Brooklyn Cultural District “South Site.” In partnership with the other cultural tenants of the site -- 651 Arts, the Brooklyn Public Library, MoCADA—the South Site Plaza will offer a variety of outdoor programming to engage our audiences, activate the area, and reflect the vibrancy of the growing Brooklyn Cultural District. BAM has made a financial commitment to the MetroTech BID to help with the initial programming of this space.

- Neighborhood Character
 - BAM is located within a culturally significant and historically black community. We work to include neighbors old and new in our programming and to preserve the character and culture of the neighborhood that we have been a part of for over a century.
 - The 40th annual DanceAfrica Festival, which takes place every Memorial Day weekend, is a prime example of BAM's commitment to providing the community with access to programming that has been identified as a cultural priority. We expect 50,000 visitors to the performances and Bazaar over the four-day festival, which we partner with Weeksville Heritage Center and Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration to present.

- BAM carefully surveys our audience and considers our community when planning free events and other programming. We strive to be a community gathering place, and each year at Halloween, our BAMboo! festival reinforces BAM's status as a neighborhood asset.
- Returning this June for its 5th year, BAM's Everybooty is set to once again break new ground as one of the City's most inclusive and radically artful Pride Week events. The BAM Fisher will be filled with music, art, performances, and members of the LGBTQ+ community for a memorable and affirming night. BAM is especially proud of our efforts to engage and support this historically underserved population, and recognize the queer community of Downtown Brooklyn as an essential artistic partners and members of our audience.
- BAM welcomes the opportunity to create new strategies and work with our neighbors to prevent cultural displacement and preserve the character of the wonderful neighborhood we are privileged to call home.

In summary, BAM is excited to work with the Department of Cultural Affairs and the City to be a cultural leader through CreateNYC. By presenting world-class, international performances and programming in Brooklyn, we are able to have a major cultural and economic impact right here in our local community. As a large, historic institution, we are poised to bring more outstanding programming and services to more neighborhoods and communities, and help our fellow cultural organizations and local artists build capacity and navigate the changing landscape. We hope that you will consider BAM's rich history and enormous potential when finalizing the cultural plan, and recognize that, with your continued and increased support, we are ready to serve our community even beyond what we are currently doing.

Sincerely,



Katy Clark
President



Keith Stubblefield
CFO and VP of Finance & Administration