



## Brooklyn Public Library Announces In-Person & Virtual Fall 2020 Arts and Cultural Programming

### Highlights include:

- The release of the *28<sup>th</sup> Amendment Project*'s crowd-sourced proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution from members of the Brooklyn community, along with accompanying in-person and digital programming
- American Civil Liberties Union President **Susan Herman** presenting the 2020 Kahn Humanities Lecture on COVID-19 in a time of constitutional crisis
- Choreographer, director, and author **Bill T. Jones** delivers the fifth BPL-commissioned *Message from the Library* the week of the Presidential election
- The launch of *Whispering Libraries* – curated outdoor playlists across Brooklyn to inspire and uplift the community
- Peabody Award winner **Kurt Andersen**, best-selling author and historian **Jill Lepore**, *Politico* journalist **Dan C. Goldberg**, and more discuss their latest literary works
- The return of Library favorites – **University Open Air** outdoors in Prospect Park, a digital iteration of *LitFilm: A BPL Film Festival About Writers*, musical offerings, and more

**Brooklyn, NY**— August 26, 2020— **Brooklyn Public Library** (BPL) today unveiled its 2020 **BPL Presents** fall season, a series of free cultural programming that provides myriad opportunities for engagement from the community. Season highlights include the return of **University Open Air**'s outdoor classes, in partnership with Prospect Park Alliance and the launch of *Whispering Libraries*, which offers snippets of literary classics, oral histories and inspiring tales which can be heard outside Library branches and small speakers attached to bicycles pedaled by a group of riders. Additional highlights include a presentation by choreographer, director, and author **Bill T. Jones**, who will digitally deliver the BPL-commissioned *Message from the Library* five days after the Presidential election; and **Susan Herman**, President of the American Civil Liberties Union, who will present the 2020 Kahn Humanities Lecture on COVID-19 and the Constitution.

“Presenting some of the most thrilling writers and thinkers working today and tackling some of the most pressing issues of our time, from racism to climate change, we look forward to engaging our community online and in outdoor spaces this fall,” said **László Jakab Orsós**, **Vice President of Arts and Culture at Brooklyn Public Library**. “As we continue to add library services in a safe way, we are excited to introduce *Whispering Libraries* and present new editions of audience-favorites, including another stimulating semester of the immigrant-taught University Open Air and the *LitFilm* festival.”

BPL's fall 2020 programming expands on the Library's mission to redefine libraries as centers for ideas and exploration through its more than 60,000 free programs each year. Following the overwhelming response to virtual author talks earlier this year, attended by people from across Brooklyn and around the world, fall 2020 online author talks continue with **Kurt Andersen** on his new chronicle of America's

economic undoing, *Evil Geniuses* (September 2); **Matt Sandler** on his work *The Black Romantic Revolution*, in which he proposes that the Black Romantics' cultural innovations have shaped Black radical culture to this day (September 8); *Politico* journalist **Dan C. Goldberg** on *The Golden Thirteen*, featuring the stories of the 13 courageous Black men who integrated the officer corps of the U.S. Navy during World War II (September 9); **Tara June Winch** discussing *The Yield*, her powerful new novel that seeks to reclaim Indigenous identity and storytelling (September 10); and historian **Jill Lepore** in conversation with Data & Society founder **danah boyd** on Lepore's newest book, *If Then* (September 17).

Award-winning choreographer, dancer, and author **Bill T. Jones** will deliver BPL's biannual *Message from the Library* online on November 8, five days after the 2020 Presidential election. The BPL-commissioned address convenes diverse voices to have meaningful dialogue about the most debated issues of the day. On Thursday, October 13, **Susan Herman**, President of the American Civil Liberties Union, will take to the digital stage to present the 2020 Kahn Humanities Lecture, in which she will discuss boosting the value the U.S. Constitution places on community, especially in light of the current pandemic, continuing BPL's year-long conversation about the formative document of the country.

**University Open Air** (UOA), a forum for foreign-born scholars to share their knowledge and experience, hosted by BPL and Prospect Park Alliance, will return to the Prospect Park Boathouse and the surrounding area. Beginning on September 16, Brooklynites can participate in free classes focusing on French and Francophone literature, the effects of COVID-19 on the environment and climate, contemporary Taiwanese poetry, and the intersection of Italian and Albanian culture, taught by professors from countries around the world. Class sizes will remain limited to ensure proper social distancing at all times. For a full lineup of courses, please visit the BPL website [here](#).

In September, BPL will launch its newest series, *Whispering Libraries*, audio playlists which will quietly greet passersby on the sidewalk outside of Library branches and in downtown Brooklyn as bicycle riders with speakers pedal across the city. The playlists are organized around themes ranging from loneliness to perseverance; and will blend audio versions of literary classics with contemporary authors and poets speaking about social justice, classical and contemporary music, oral histories, and other archival gems from the Brooklyn Collection and Brooklyn Historical Society.

Following BPL's season-long series of virtual town halls, which brought together more than 400 participants to discuss, debate, and propose the next amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the Library will continue its programming for the *28<sup>th</sup> Amendment Project* throughout September, including the release of the crowd-sourced amendment drafted by framers including **Nikole-Hannah Jones**, **Nathaniel Rich**, **Anand Giridharadas**, and **Susan Herman**. In addition, the Library will present programs and exhibitions related to the project, including **Sheryl Oring's** participatory project, *I Wish to Say*, in which she sets up portable public offices and invites individuals to compose messages to the President of the United States about their wishes for a revitalized democracy.

*LitFilm: A BPL Film Festival About Writers* will return virtually this fall, showcasing films from around the world that provide a behind-the-scenes look at the private lives, artistic processes, and political struggles of some of the world's most celebrated writers and literary figures from **Toni Morrison**, **Elena Ferrante**, and **N. Scott Momaday**. The festival, a staple of BPL Presents' innovative cultural and civic programming, will also include talkbacks with directors, critics and scholars including **Timothy Greenfield-Sanders** and **Michael Kantor**. *LitFilm* launches Monday, October 5 and will continue through Sunday, October 11.

A complete calendar of upcoming programs can be found [here](#) with information about how to log-in and register for specific events.

BPL Presents' programming expands upon the Library's more than 60,000 free programs offered each year. While the Library's physical services are adjusted to best serve public health needs, BPL continues to provide patrons access to virtual storytimes with librarians from across the borough, career help through its Business and Career Center, resources for students of all ages, and details on how to ensure all Brooklyn residents participate in the 2020 Census.

### **BPL Presents Programming Calendar**

*Please visit [bklynlibrary.org/bpl-presents](http://bklynlibrary.org/bpl-presents) for the most up to date listings*

#### **Kurt Andersen Discusses *Evil Geniuses***

Virtual Event on Wednesday, September 2 at 7 p.m.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, America managed to make its economic and social systems both more and more fair and more and more prosperous. But then the New Deal gave way to the Raw Deal, leaving the huge majority of Americans with dwindling economic prospects and hope. Why and how did America take such a wrong turn? In this deeply researched and brilliantly woven cultural, economic, and political chronicle, Andersen offers a fresh, provocative, and eye-opening history of America's undoing, naming names, showing receipts, and unsparingly assigning blame—to the radical right in economics and the law, the high priests of high finance, a complacent and complicit Establishment, and liberal “useful idiots,” among whom he includes himself.

#### **Matt Sandler Discusses *The Black Romantic Revolution***

Virtual event on Tuesday, September 8 at 7 p.m.

During the pitched battle over slavery in the United States, Black writers—enslaved and free—allied themselves with the cause of abolition and used their art to advocate for emancipation and to envision the end of slavery as a world-historical moment of possibility. These Black writers borrowed from the European tradition of Romanticism—lyric poetry, prophetic visions—to write, speak, and sing their hopes for what freedom might mean. In his work, *The Black Romantic Revolution*, Sandler proposes that the Black Romantics' cultural innovations have shaped Black radical culture to this day, from the blues and hip hop to Black nationalism and Black feminism. Their expressions of love and rage, grief and determination, dreams and nightmares, still echo into our present.

#### **Dan C. Goldberg on His Newest Work, *The Golden Thirteen***

Virtual event on Wednesday, September 9 at 7 p.m.

*Politico* award-winning journalist Dan C. Goldberg brings to life the story of the 13 courageous Black men who integrated the officer corps of the U.S. Navy during World War II—leading desegregation efforts across America and anticipating the civil rights movement. Through oral histories and original interviews with surviving family members, the forgotten heroes are taken from the margins of history and into the spotlight by Goldberg's revelations of the opposition these men faced: the racist pseudo-science, the regular condescension, the repeated epithets, the verbal abuse and even violence. Despite these immense challenges, the Golden Thirteen persisted, understanding the power of integration, the opportunities for black Americans if they succeeded, and the consequences if they failed.

#### **Tara June Winch Discusses *The Yield* with Anderson Tepper**

Virtual event on Thursday, September 10 at 5 p.m.

After 10 years adrift in Europe, August Gondiwindi is called home for her grandfather's memorial. Returning to the rural Australian town of Massacre Plains, August finds a mining company is set to

repossess her family home and dig up ancestral land—unless she can help stop it in time. Determined to make amends for leaving and to right history’s wrongs, August races to save her home and community. A book her grandfather was working on before he died—a compendium of Wiradjuri language, traditions, and memories—may just hold the key. Told in three masterfully woven narratives, *The Yield* is a powerful reclaiming of Indigenous identity and storytelling. It has been called “a beautifully written novel that puts language at the heart of remembering the past and understanding the present” and “a groundbreaking novel for black and white Australia.”

**Artist Spotlight: Lizania Cruz, Kemi Ilesanmi, and Kilolo Luckett on Art that Reimagines the Future**

Virtual event on Monday, September 14 at 7 p.m.

This arts dialogue delves into ways that artists, curators, and arts organizations center care in the production of artwork within and for communities—in Brooklyn and beyond—recognizing that art serves as a vital means for reimagining a future where no one is disposable. In this conversation, Brooklyn-based artist Lizania Cruz; Executive Director of The Laundromat Project Kemi Ilesanmi; and Curator and Art Historian Kilolo Luckett, creator of the forthcoming art space Alma/Lewis discuss how art can reimagine the future in a conversation moderated by BPL Visual Arts Curator Cora Fisher.

**Alan Mikhail on *God’s Shadow* with Alexis Coe**

Virtual event on Monday, September 14 at 7 p.m.

Long neglected in world history, the Ottoman Empire was a hub of intellectual fervor, geopolitical power, and enlightened pluralistic rule. At the height of their authority in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottomans, with extraordinary military dominance and unparalleled monopolies over trade routes, controlled more territory and ruled over more people than any world power, forcing Europeans out of the Mediterranean and to the New World.

**University Open Air**

September 16–27

Prospect Park Boathouse and the surrounding area

University Open Air (UOA)—a space for foreign-born scholars to share their knowledge and experience with fellow community members—will return for a third semester in September in partnership with the Prospect Park Alliance. The public is invited to take free courses in a variety of academic subjects, which will take place at the Prospect Park Boathouse and surrounding areas. Additional details to be announced.

**Review Panel**

Virtual event on Wednesday, September 16 at 7 p.m.

Lee Ann Norman and Hrag Vartanian join David Cohen to discuss Odili Donald Odita: *Mirror* at Jack Shainman Gallery (opens to public September 10), and *Without Gorky*, directed by Cosima Spender, (Peacock Pictures Ltd, 2011) streaming on Netflix.

**Historian Jill Lepore Discusses *If Then* with danah boyd, Founder of Data & Society**

Virtual event on Thursday, September 17 at 7 p.m.

Co-presented with Data & Society

The Simulmatics Corporation, launched during the Cold War, mined data, targeted voters, manipulated consumers, destabilized politics, and disordered knowledge—decades before Facebook, Google, and Cambridge Analytica. Jill Lepore, best-selling author of *These Truths*, came across the company’s papers

in MIT's archives and set out to tell this forgotten history, the long-lost backstory to the methods, and the arrogance, of Silicon Valley. She discusses these findings and their cautionary tale with danah boyd, Founder of Data & Society.

**Climate Reads: Parable of the Sower**

Virtual event on Tuesday September 22, at 7 p.m.

BPL Presents and Writers Rebel NYC invite patrons to join a community of readers and writers across the nation in the Climate Reads series—a year-long reading and discussion of books shedding light on the climate crisis and environmental justice, to help guide and inspire us to take necessary action. The kickoff book for September is Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*. When global climate change and economic crises lead to social chaos in the early 2020s, California becomes full of dangers, from pervasive water shortage to masses of vagabonds who will do anything to live to see another day. Fifteen-year-old Lauren Olamina lives inside a gated community, sheltered from the surrounding anarchy. In a society where any vulnerability is a risk, she suffers from hyperempathy, a debilitating sensitivity to others' emotions. Read the book and then come and join the discussion on Zoom.

**Green Series: Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson Discusses *All We Can Save***

Virtual event on Wednesday, September 23 at 6:30 p.m.

For the September Green Series, Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson discusses *All We Can Save*, provocative essays that illuminate the expertise and insights of dozens of diverse women leading on climate in the United States—scientists, journalists, farmers, strategists, teachers, activists, innovators, builders, and designers, across ages, geographies, and ethnicities—and aims to advance a more representative, nuanced, and solution-oriented public conversation on the climate crisis. These women are offering a spectrum of ideas and insights for how we can rapidly, radically reshape society.

**Concert Series: Rolf Schulte**

Virtual event on Sunday, September 27 at 4 p.m.

German-born Rolf Schulte, whom *The New Yorker* has called “one of the most distinguished violinists of our day,” performs a selection of Beethoven sonatas in honor of the composer's 250<sup>th</sup> birth year.

**Concert Series: Flutronix**

Virtual event on Sunday, October 4 at 4 p.m.

Flutronix is Nathalie Joachim and Allison Loggins-Hull, two blazing young flutists whose original urban art pop sound, comfortable in both clubs and concert halls, is best described as “a unique blend of classical music, hip-hop, electronic programming and soulful vocals reminiscent of neo-R&B stars like Erykah Badu,” (*The Wall Street Journal*). Flutronix's work as performers, producers, and composers has led to collaborations with an impressive range of artists and ensembles including legendary hip-hop producer Ski Beatz, electronic music sensation Dan Deacon, the International Contemporary Ensemble and more.

**LitFilm – Toni Morrison: *The Pieces I am***

Virtual event, Monday, October 5 at 7 p.m.

US, 2019, 120 mins

Documentary, dir. by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders

An artful and uplifting documentary on the life of the legendary storyteller and Nobel prize-winner. From her childhood in Lorain, OH to '70s-era book tours with Muhammad Ali, from the front lines with Angela Davis to her riverfront writing room, Toni Morrison reflects on race, America, and the human condition as

seen through the prism of her work. The film includes appearances by Hilton Als, Angela Davis, Fran Lebowitz, Walter Mosley, Sonia Sanchez, and Oprah Winfrey. The screening will be followed by a talkback with director Timothy Greenfield-Sanders.

**LitFilm – *N. Scott Momaday: Words from a Bear***

Virtual event, Saturday, October 10 at 8 p.m.

US, 2019, 85 mins

Documentary, dir. by Jeffrey Palmer

A spiritual journey into the enigmatic life and mind of Native America's most celebrated author, whose Pulitzer Prize-winning *House Made of Dawn* led to the Native American Renaissance. Using a fresh approach to biographical storytelling, Indigenous filmmaker Jeffrey Palmer visually captures Momaday's creative core in this American Masters film through original animation, historical photos and aerial landscapes, and interviews with Robert Redford, Jeff Bridges, Beau Bridges, James Earl Jones, and Joy Harjo. The screening will be followed by a talkback with director Jeffrey Palmer and American Masters Executive Producer Michael Kantor.

**LitFilm – *Ferrante Fever***

Virtual event, Sunday, October 11 at 7:30 p.m.

US, 2017, 74 mins

Documentary, dir. by Giacomo Durzi

With over 10 million copies of her Neapolitan novels sold in over 50 countries, Elena Ferrante is a global literary sensation. A journey between New York City's cultural hub and Ferrante's native Italy, the film explores how an anonymous author's visceral tales of love and friendship gained such an enthusiastic following. Hillary Clinton, Roberto Saviano, and Jonathan Franzen weigh in on what makes her work and mysterious persona so uniquely captivating. The screening will be followed by a Q&A with Ann Goldstein, Ferrante's translator, and Michael Reynolds, Editor in Chief of Europa Editions, Ferrante's U.S. publisher.

**2020 Kahn Humanities Lecture with ACLU President Susan Herman**

Virtual event on Tuesday, October 13 at 7 p.m.

During the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, the U.S. Constitution has been invoked in various ways: privacy issues surrounding contact tracing, democracy issues about election rules (including 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment litigation), equity issues arising from the disproportionate impact of the virus and of the enforcement of health measures like social distancing and mask requirements, reproductive freedom, and so on. Some contend that the Constitution prevents our government from mandating health measures like wearing masks, ordering non-essential businesses to close, limiting religious assembly, or requiring vaccinations. Polling suggests that a majority of Americans disagree, believing that our highest goal should be protection of the people in our community—as opposed to a more libertarian view of individual freedom; almost all courts have agreed. But, interestingly, community is not one of the values embodied in our Constitution. In that light, and BPL's ongoing *28<sup>th</sup> Amendment Project* programming, Susan Herman argues now is an ideal time to consider adding a 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, borrowing from Article I of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to declare commitment to one another as one of our fundamental values.

**Marcial Gala Discusses His Novel *The Black Cathedral* with Anderson Tepper and Anna Kushner**

Virtual event, Wednesday, October 14 at 7 p.m.

When the Stuart family moves to a marginal neighborhood of Cienfuegos, a city on the southern coast of Cuba, Arturo Stuart, a charismatic, visionary preacher, discovers that God has given him a mission: to build

a temple that surpasses any before seen in Cuba, and to make of Cienfuegos a new Jerusalem. Told by a chorus of narrators—including gossips, gangsters, a ghost, and a serial killer—who flirt, lie, argue, and finish one another's stories, this English-language debut from Cuban literary star Gala, *The Black Cathedral* is a darkly comic indictment of modern Cuba and a portrait of what remains when dreams of utopia have withered away, a gritty and haunting tale of race, magic, belief, and fate.

**Sheryl Oring, *I Wish to Say***

Virtual and in-person locations including Central Library Plaza October 16-20

BPL will mark the upcoming 2020 election with a presentation of artist Sheryl Oring's participatory project *I Wish to Say*, promoting democracy and engaging the public in exercising their right to speak to power. In *I Wish to Say*, Oring sets up portable public offices—complete with a manual typewriter and staffed by a costumed typist—that invite individuals to compose messages to the President noting what they wish to see in a revitalized democracy. The typists record these messages onto postcards that are displayed as part of a pop-up exhibition and then addressed and sent to elected officials. Amid a chaotic election year and global pandemic, this presentation of the work also marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, guaranteeing women the right to vote.

**Concert Series: The Oracle Hysterical**

Virtual event on Sunday October 25 at 4 p.m.

Part band, part book club, Oracle Hysterical combines eclectic musical influences with literary breadth. All members of the group perform and compose, with each project developed collectively. Oracle's works occupy the fluid space between classically-inclined song-cycle and art-rock concept album. The group's songwriting illuminates fragments of great literary works like a child in a dark forest with a flashlight. Text sources have ranged from Grimms' Fairy Tales to Greek tragedy, and falsely-attributed Shakespeare, all in collections of songs that distill centuries-old writing through a unique contemporary lens.

**Message from the Library: Bill T. Jones**

Virtual event on Sunday, November 8 at 7 p.m.

A biannual series, *Message from the Library* convenes diverse voices in the Library's safe space to have meaningful dialogue about the most important issues of the day.

**Concert Series: Pedro Giraud Tango Quartet**

Virtual event on November 15 at 4 p.m.

Regarded as one of the most compelling tango artists today, Latin Grammy Award winner Pedro Giraud is a preeminent cultural ambassador for the beautiful and passionate music of his native Argentina. His compositions represent the evolution of tango, from its roots in the traditional orquesta típica, to tango nuevo as epitomized by Astor Piazzolla, and to his own sound that respects the past and looks to the future, bringing something new and exciting to the form while retaining all its lushness and beauty.

**Review Panel**

Virtual event on Wednesday, November 18 at 7 p.m.

Leading art critics join in lively debate about current exhibitions—virtual and physical-- around the five boroughs. Presented in association with Artcritical.

**Concert Series: Music in Color: Eleanor Alberga**

Virtual event on Monday, November 30 at 7 p.m.

Part of Orchestra of St. Luke's annual five-borough community concert tour, Music in Color highlights the life, music, and continually evolving career of composer Eleanor Alberga. A British composer of Jamaican descent, Alberga is prolific in nearly every genre, from opera and choral works to pieces for both chamber ensemble and full orchestra. Her works are commonly played throughout Europe with performances and recordings by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, among others. Playwright and performer Kirya Traber will join OSL to guide audiences through Alberga's story and inspiration. This concert will include the North American premiere of Alberga's *Shining Gate of Morpheus* for horn and string quartet.

###

### **About Brooklyn Public Library**

[Brooklyn Public Library](#) is one of the nation's largest library systems and among New York City's most democratic institutions. As a leader in developing modern 21st century libraries, we provide resources to support personal advancement, foster civic literacy, and strengthen the fabric of community among the more than 2.7 million individuals who call Brooklyn home. We provide nearly 60,000 free programs a year with writers, thinkers, artists, and educators—from around the corner and around the world. And we give patrons millions of opportunities to enjoy one of life's greatest satisfactions: the joy of a good book.

###

### **Media Contacts**

Fritzi Bodenheimer  
Brooklyn Public Library  
[FBodenheimer@bklynlibrary.org](mailto:FBodenheimer@bklynlibrary.org)  
929-276-4232

Julie Danni / Sarah Morris / Katrina Reynolds  
Resnicow and Associates  
[jdanni@resnicow.com](mailto:jdanni@resnicow.com) / [smorris@resnicow.com](mailto:smorris@resnicow.com) / [kreynolds@resnicow.com](mailto:kreynolds@resnicow.com)  
212-671-5173 / 212-671-5165 / 212-671-5184