

**LOWER MANHATTAN CULTURAL COUNCIL  
PRESENTS THE 20TH ANNUAL  
RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL JUNE 10-27**



**ALL EVENTS FREE, INCLUDING WORK BY AND FEATURING:**

**ARTHUR Jafa  
BLACK GOTHAM EXPERIENCE FEAT. KAMAU WARE AND RODNEY LEON  
DAMON DAVIS  
ESPERANZA SPALDING  
MARIA HASSABI  
MARIANA VALENCIA  
MEG WEBSTER  
MIGUEL GUTIERREZ  
MUNA MALIK  
NORA CHIPAUMIRE  
OKWUI OKPOKWASILI  
ONYEDIKA CHUKE  
THE ILLUSTRIOUS BLACKS  
WAYNE SHORTER  
WOMXN IN WINDOWS**

April **XXX**, 2021—**Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC)** presents the 20th annual **River To River Festival**, Downtown New York City’s leading free summer arts festival, taking place **June 10–27**.

From its origins in the aftermath of 9/11 to the present context of the global pandemic, River To River has long highlighted the fundamental role that creativity in all its forms plays in processes of recovery, resilience and renewal. This year, the cathartic power of groundbreaking work by pioneering artists is on full display, in a wide-ranging program that takes into account the present moment and offers audiences new ways of seeing and opportunities for profound connection—with the artists themselves, with New York City as it emerges from a pandemic and with one another.

Co-curated by **Lili Chopra**, LMCC’s Executive Director of Artistic Programs, and **Nanette Nelms**, a NYC-based filmmaker with roots in performance and contemporary dance, the lineup includes cross-disciplinary work by and featuring such bold artistic voices as **Arthur Jafa**, **esperanza spalding**, **Wayne Shorter**, **Black Gotham Experience** featuring **Kamau Ware** and **Rodney Leon**, **Okwui Okpokwasili**, **Miguel Gutierrez**, **The Illustrious Blacks**, **Maria Hassabi**, **nora chipaumire**, **Mariana Valencia**, **Meg Webster**, **Onyedika Chuke**, **Damon Davis**, **Muna Malik** and more. The program offers a robust hybrid of in-person outdoor performances and participatory events, safe indoor gatherings following strict COVID-19 protocols and online streaming options—thereby allowing individual audience members to participate at their own levels of comfort. In-person performances and presentations traverse the city from the Lower East Side to Battery Park City, across the harbor to Governors Island and back up to the Financial District.

“This edition of River To River comes at a complex moment. As we were programming the Festival this past year, societally we were experiencing a sustained period of collective trauma, rife with incessant ideological, psychological and physical attacks, staggering loss, and an overwhelming sense of isolation,” says Nelms. “Yet slowly, through conversations with artists we care so deeply about, we found a common entry point: starting from a place of history. Kamau Ware profoundly inspired us with his extraordinary success in petitioning city officials to recognize Land of the Blacks, 28 Black-owned farmsteads that once covered a large part of Lower Manhattan. Mariana Valencia and nora chipaumire also unearth layers from the past in their work, giving much needed perspective to the present.”

“This year’s Festival offers a space to be with our emotions and ask timely questions of ourselves and others,” adds Chopra. “The works by Damon Davis, Womxn in Windows and Maria Hassabi invite us to quietly sit in the present, to allow for intimate transformations to take place. At the same time, we recognize that this moment is an opportunity to come together in celebration and solidarity. We honor pioneers such as Wayne Shorter, esperanza spalding and Arthur Jafa and ultimately rejoice in artists continuing to lead the way, through participatory processions led by Miguel Gutierrez, Okwui Okpokwasili and The Illustrious Blacks.”

The Festival opens with an homage to legendary jazz musician **Wayne Shorter**, featuring the world premiere of *WS, a longer super nova*—a short film directed by renowned visual artist **Arthur Jafa**. The film depicts Shorter in conversation with **esperanza spalding** and provides a rare stream-of-consciousness glimpse into the genius minds of two jazz masters. Audiences will also be treated to a live evening performance with spalding, **Terri Lyne Carrington** and **Leo Genovese** honoring Shorter in concert.

Then, spalding brings her *Songwrights Apothecary Lab* to River To River, continuing her exploration over the past years of how musicians might meaningfully incorporate therapeutic practices and knowledge into their work. This in-person version is a live installation where spalding and her fellow songwriters, researchers and mentors will be creating original music, which the lab will share with visitors during the Festival.

Concurrently, artist, educator and polymath **Kamau Ware** of **Black Gotham Experience** and architect **Rodney Leon**, designer of the **African Burial Ground Memorial**, lead audiences on walking tours through Lower Manhattan, exploring significant spiritual sites of the African Diaspora through their project *As Above So Below*. They will also produce a capsule podcast collection delving into the creative process of making the walking tours and the evolution of the project. In addition, Ware will pen a written piece on *Land of the Blacks* including sketches and renderings of proposed monuments for Lower Manhattan, which will debut on the [River To River website](#).

Artist residency programs serve as a pillar of LMCC's work (alongside public programming and grant-making), and this year River To River includes projects by three visionary LMCC Extended Life Residency artists: **nora chipaumire**, **Maria Hassabi** and **Mariana Valencia**. Developed and realized by LMCC for mid-career choreographers, the Extended Life program extends the lives of works of dance and expands upon existing works for presentation in non-traditional or site-based venues. In *Nehanda*, chipaumire investigates the myth of the titular spirit venerated by the Shona people of Zimbabwe and central Mozambique, channeled through the medium Charwe Nyakasikana—a heroic revolutionary leader who orchestrated the first uprisings of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. Hassabi presents *TOGETHER (2019)*, a meditation on togetherness and the ways in which we affect and are affected by one another. And in a new 2021 version of her *Futurity*, Valencia transmits the queer stories of elders in NYC's Village from the 1960s to the present.

Movement and dance are also highlighted in a series of participatory processions in the open air spaces of Battery Park City led by **The Illustrious Blacks**, **Miguel Gutierrez** and **Okwui Okpokwasili**, presented in partnership with Movement Research and Battery Park City Authority. The form and nature of each will vary by leader, but all will include a time of transmission from the artist to the participants, followed by a procession. All are welcome to participate—no prior experience or skill level required—and each procession may also be witnessed by the public.

Installed in windows across The Seaport District, **Womxn in Windows** is a multi-part video installation which focuses on the confluence of culture and society in an exploration of the multi-faceted female identity. Womxn from diverse cultural backgrounds present video artworks which challenge, both in content and in context, society's definition of femininity, redefining what it means to be a "womxn in a window."

Finally, **A Day at The Arts Center at Governors Island** invites audiences to attend day-long events and activations at The Arts Center, while also enjoying the idyllic locale of Governors Island. Included are large, site-specific exhibitions by **Meg Webster** and **Onyedika Chuke**, a participatory sculpture by **Muna Malik**, Open Studios with LMCC artists-in-residence and ongoing screenings of **Damon Davis'** film, *The Stranger*, depicting the journey of a being that descends from the sky in search of an unknown, earthbound homeland.

LMCC continues to monitor the COVID-19 situation and appropriate COVID-19 health

protocols will be in place for visitors entering The Arts Center and attending all events. In addition, select performances and digital films in the Festival's program will be streamed on LMCC's website, [LMCC.net](http://LMCC.net).

The full River To River schedule will be announced soon.

## **ABOUT RIVER TO RIVER**

River To River, LMCC's annual summer festival, was created in the aftermath of 9/11 with the intention to heal and celebrate New Yorkers' resiliency through the power of art. Since 2002, River To River has remained free and open to all, showcasing artistic and creative diversity across disciplines through the presentation of art and installation in public spaces and in partnership with leading institutions in Lower Manhattan.

## **RIVER TO RIVER FOUNDING PARTNERS**

River To River was founded in 2002 by American Express, The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, the Alliance for Downtown New York, Brookfield Place, Battery Park City Authority, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and Seaport District.

## **RIVER TO RIVER 2021 PRESENTING PARTNERS**

Battery Park City Authority  
Movement Research  
The Broad Stage  
The Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural & Educational Center  
The Howard Hughes Corporation  
The Seaport District

## **RIVER TO RIVER 2021 SUPPORT**

Leadership support provided by: The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

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Friends of the Festival: Con Edison and Mertz Gilmore Foundation.

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River To River is also made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

## **ABOUT LMCC**

Founded as Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC), LMCC serves, connects and makes space for artists and community.

LMCC Serves Artists through:

- [Residencies](#) that enable artists to experiment and develop their work and ideas, with

professional development, financial training and networking opportunities

- [Grant funding](#) to artists that support local/neighborhood projects
- [Presentation opportunities](#) that allow artists to share their work and creative process with the public

LMCC Serves Community through:

- [Free public programs](#) in Lower Manhattan that activate neighborhoods and bring people together through performances and rich artistic experiences
- [Access to artists and the artmaking process](#) to build connections and dialogue between artists and audiences
- [Grant funding](#) for neighborhood arts and community-based organizations

Since 1973, LMCC has been the champion of independent artists in New York City and the cultural life force of Lower Manhattan.

[www.LMCC.net/R2R](http://www.LMCC.net/R2R)

#R2R21

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