

WINTER 2020

# OFF THE SHELF

A LOOK INSIDE  
BROOKLYN PUBLIC  
LIBRARY

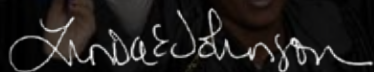
**Bklyn**  
Public Library





## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is a big year for Brooklyn. The 2020 Census is rapidly approaching, and the Library will play a critical role in counting every Kings County resident—few if any civic institutions are as integrated into the life of our neighborhoods as the Library. Two branches will open this year: Greenpoint, along with its Environmental Education Center, and Adams Street, a brand-new location on the waterfront serving DUMBO, Vinegar Hill and Farragut. In branches across the borough, we are excited to implement round six of BKLYN Incubator, an initiative focused on innovative programming and staff development. This winter issue of *Off the Shelf* proves Brooklyn Public Library is as creative and energized as the city we serve.



**Linda E. Johnson**  
President & CEO

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Cover: Jasmine Wilson performing with the Dream Unfinished Orchestra at BPL's *'Til Victory is Won* teach-in held at Central Library in October 2019, observing the 400th anniversary of the arrival of enslaved Africans to the shores of Jamestown, Virginia.

All photos, unless indicated, by Gregg Richards

BPL Adult Education program graduates celebrate receiving their high school diplomas at a recent graduation ceremony at Central Library

**The next U.S. Census is just around the corner, with the household self-response period beginning in mid-March 2020.** Mandated by our Constitution, the U.S. Census Bureau counts the entire U.S. population every decade. This count determines each state's allotment in the House of Representatives, how legislative districts are redrawn, and the annual distribution of billions of dollars of federal state aid.

For the first time in history, the 2020 Census will be primarily conducted online. Brooklyn (Kings County) is considered uniquely hard-to-count, due to the high population percentage of renters, single parents, children under five, residents who are foreign-born and/or over the age of 65, as well as those with limited English proficiency and without internet at home. In order to increase 2020 response rates, City and State advocates have secured funding to connect with key at-risk demographics. Public libraries will be a major player and Amy Mikel, Manager of Civic Engagement, is leading the charge at BPL to ensure Brooklyn's 2.6M residents are counted. "Libraries are key to building

an atmosphere of trust around the census," says Mikel. "We're already reaching hard-to-count communities within our branches and will partner with every possible group to help amplify census awareness."

Mikel's team is rolling out dozens of census-focused programs including storytimes, community forums, public lectures and open house events. BPL's network of 1700+ computers and laptops have been readied for the census, including special tablets. Partnerships with neighborhood-based organizations will ensure that census messaging is tailored as much as possible. Says Mikel, "the Library has emerged as a key leader, connector and convener among the hundreds of groups citywide supporting the 2020 Census."

***We're working towards achieving 100% participation in Brooklyn.*** AMY MIKEL

# BROOKLYN COUNTS

**BROOKLYN AND BPL PREPARE FOR THE 2020 U.S. CENSUS**



# I, ASIMOV IN BROOKLYN

## HOW BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY SHAPED A WRITER'S MIND

*I'll write as I please and let the critics do the analyzing.*

ISAAC ASIMOV, 1973

By the time Isaac Asimov died in 1992, he had written or edited over 500 books and hundreds of short stories over the course of his 72 years; a staggeringly prolific career. A giant amongst the Hard Science Fiction genre, he was considered one of the "Big Three" along with Robert Heinlein and Arthur C. Clarke. He won every science fiction award available, creating canonical characters and stories. It was Asimov who coined the term "robotics" and was responsible for conceiving the ground-breaking "Three Laws of Robotics" (from his book *I, Robot*) which have informed much of how robots have been portrayed in literature, film and television.

His family immigrated from Russia in 1923, lived at numerous addresses in Brooklyn and owned a series of candy shops. It was in these candy shops that the soon-to-be-great writer began reading the store's stockpile of science fiction pulp novels. In fact, so much emphasis is placed on

the power of those "pulp" in shaping Asimov's writing that it showed up in nearly every obituary written about him. But a bit of digging reveals that Isaac's story is more nuanced than that. The door to storytelling may have been opened by pulp stories, but the room it led to was Brooklyn Public Library.

Asimov's father secured him a library card as a tactic to keep him away from that science fiction "trash," as it was referred to. Ironically, BPL provided even greater access as well as windows into many other worlds. According to his memoir, Asimov's experiences in the library left an indelible impression: "My real education, the superstructure, the details, the true architecture, I got out of the public library. For an impoverished child whose family could not afford to buy books, the library was the open door to wonder and achievement, and I can never be sufficiently grateful that I had the wit to charge through that door and make the most of it."

→ To learn more visit  
[bklynlibrary.org/blogs/brooklynology](https://bklynlibrary.org/blogs/brooklynology)

Images from Brooklyn Collection / Original cover art by Amelia S. Edwards

Host your next private event at  
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Photo by Gustavo Campus

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## FIVE YEAR CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

# NO NEIGHBORHOOD IS TRULY COMPLETE WITHOUT A LOCAL LIBRARY TO SERVE IT.

Brooklyn Public Library has always striven to ensure that our resources are in easy reach of every one of Brooklyn's 2.6 million residents.

In recent years, growing communities and residential shifts have created the need for new and improved branches. As a result, BPL has embarked on a massive capital construction campaign. In the coming five years, work will begin (or has already begun) on the creation of two new branches and the renovation or rebuilding of over a dozen other branches.

First up is **Greenpoint Library**, which is being completely rebuilt to include an Environmental Education Center that will transform the branch and promote environmental awareness in the neighborhood. Later in the year, the new **Adams Street Library** will open to serve the DUMBO and Vinegar Hill neighborhoods, including the Farragut Houses, to be followed by a beautiful new **Brooklyn Heights Library**. Also, the former **Brower Park Library** in Crown Heights will be moved into the Brooklyn Children's Museum, fostering opportunities for collaborative programming between the two institutions, and a cultural commons located in the BAM Cultural District will be opening in the next year to serve as a Library outpost in that vibrant cultural hub. In addition, other branches will be undergoing complete redesigns and renovations over the next several years, including Sunset Park, Rugby (East Flatbush), Red Hook, Brownsville and Eastern Parkway (Crown Heights).

➔ To learn more about the Central Library project visit [bklynlibrary.org/locations/central/renovation](https://bklynlibrary.org/locations/central/renovation)



Rendering by WORKac

Meanwhile, BPL's flagship Central Library is already in the midst of a multi-phase renovation project. We're making much-needed updates to the elevators, restrooms, fire alarm systems, HVAC and wayfinding. The Grand Lobby is getting restored historic oak panels, new floors, lighting, HVAC and exhibition cases. The information, check-out and returns desks are moving to **Central's new Major Owens Welcome Center**, named for the beloved Central librarian and former Congressman. The Popular Library is moving to a new space on the first floor to serve as a gateway into Central's diverse collection. We're also creating **a new Civic Commons** with an entrance on Flatbush Avenue that will house the passport office, IDNYC and bring together all the community services we offer at Central. The public computer center will also relocate from the third floor to this space. Meanwhile, the Business and Career Center will relocate to a prominent location on the second floor and be expanded to better provide important career and financial programming.

## Growing up in Dyker Heights, Michael Festa cherished his Saturday morning ritual.

Every week, rain or shine, he and his father would go bowling and then head to Bay Ridge Library. It was there, he says, that his love of learning and voracious appetite for reading were ignited.

Years later, Michael's service on his Community Board in Bay Ridge led him to become acquainted with Jay Filan, Fort Hamilton Library's Neighborhood Library Supervisor. "I was so impressed to learn about all the important ways the library serves my community today, and I was also reminded of how much Brooklyn Public Library meant to me growing up," he says. When Michael's father passed away years later, BPL was the natural place to honor his memory. His father was a fan of horror and science fiction and the family funded a book collection of these works in his honor.

A proud Brooklynite, Michael is also a local history buff and collector of ephemera. In 2019, he donated an array of memorabilia to BPL's Brooklyn Collection archives, including an eclectic and delightful assortment of local 20th century piggy banks. Michael's love of local history served as the catalyst for his family's ongoing support of BPL's **Brooklyn Connections** program, which introduces students to archival research and inquiry-based learning through the investigation and analysis of Brooklyn history. The Festa family provides funding for the program hoping it will inspire the next generation of Brooklyn history enthusiasts.



Photo by Jack Cavicchi

The family's generosity also extends to BPL's **Creative Aging programs**. Michael was inspired to support this program because he recognized the need for older adults to stay active and engaged in his own community. Recently, the family provided funds for Creative Aging's "This Is Our Story" project at Fort Hamilton Library, which teaches older adults storytelling and performance techniques, drawing from memories of their Brooklyn neighborhoods.

**If there's one thing I've learned about BPL, it's that no matter what stage of life you're in, the Library is always there for you.**

MICHAEL FESTA



**BookMatch** is a readers' advisory service where librarians create customized reading recommendations based on current events and on the interests and needs of patrons.

### ***Steal This Country: A Handbook for Resistance, Persistence, and Fixing Almost Everything***

by Alexandra Styron

A primer for teenage activism, from climate change, racial justice and women's rights to LGBTQIA rights, immigration and intersectionality.

### ***We Count! A 2020 Census Counting Book***

by We Count!

An interactive counting book which shows families in diverse living situations while teaching about the census.

➔ Get your own BookMatch list at [bklynlibrary.org/bookmatch](https://bklynlibrary.org/bookmatch)

### ***I Was Their American Dream: a Graphic Memoir***

by Malaka Gharib

In this exploration of identity and culture, Malaka traces her coming of age in America, learning to code-switch between her family's Filipino and Egyptian heritage while adapting to white culture.

### ***Making Hispanics: How Activists, Bureaucrats, and Media Constructed a New American***

by G. Cristina Mora

This book unpacks the origin of the terms "Hispanics" and "Latinos" and the creation of a new identity category on the decennial census.

### ***The American Census: A Social History, Second Edition***

by Margo J. Anderson

An examination of the history of the census as a tool for apportionment of power and rationale for American social science.

# BKLYN BOOKMATCH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT READING LIST

### ***Infomocracy: Book One of the Centenal Cycle***

by Malka Older

In this future fiction novel, the world operates in a "micro-democracy", divided into "centenals," which vote on a government every ten years. Can the biggest political experiment of all time succeed when so many have so much to gain?

### ***How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America***

by Moustafa Bayoumi

A profile of a community through the lives of seven young Arab Americans living in Brooklyn.

### ***A People's Future of the United States: Speculative Fiction from 25 Extraordinary Writers***

ed. Victor LaValle & John Joseph Adams

Twenty visionary stories from persons of color, indigenous writers, women, queer and trans people, Muslims and others whose imagination of a bright future for themselves is too often seen as an act of resistance.



A librarian presents at the Incubator pitch competition

# BKLYN Incubator

If you've ever had a conversation with a librarian, you know they are full of ideas and insights into how to serve the public and improve programming. To harness this energy, BPL launched the BKLYN Incubator program in 2015, empowering librarians and public-serving staff to devise grassroots projects that respond directly to community needs. Staff receive professional development, mentorship and resources to help them further advance their innovative ideas for community-focused programming.

At the start of each Incubator cycle, inspired staff members are encouraged to draft a proposal outlining their idea, which is then assessed by a panel of their peers, in addition to receiving online public feedback. After careful review, a group of finalists then make live presentations before a panel of judges, also composed of fellow Library staffers. The winning projects receive small seed grants to help launch these new and exciting programs. To date, BKLYN Incubator has engaged over 300 staff members from 53 different BPL branches. Over 40 pilot programs have been funded and many have

continued after the conclusion of their initial launch. Several BKLYN Incubator programs have even expanded to include additional BPL branches.

**"It's really important to tap into the vast knowledge base of our staff from across the borough. They know their patrons, their communities, and most importantly they know the needs that can be provided by the Library."** BRYNNA TUCKER  
SENIOR MANAGER OF INNOVATION

BKLYN Incubator projects cover a wide range of subjects and target populations. Now in its sixth round of funding, past Incubator programs have included teen writing workshops (**Tracing Your Roots**), social work consultations and life coaching outreach to the homeless (**Shine on Me**), training for immigrants to become childcare providers (**Root Resource**), numerous innovative lending libraries (musical instruments, board games), and several community podcasts for teens (**Bklyn Mixtape**, **KNRC Radio**, and **Brownsville Excerpts**) and adults (**Hear Me Out**).

BKLYN Incubator is supported by generous funding provided by The Charles H. Revson Foundation and Robin K. and Jay L. Lewis.

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Adeeba Rana (on left) presiding over Brighton Beach's CookMobile program last June.

neighborhood as a whole instead of small, segregated populations."

Adeeba's 2019 program, **CookMobile**, taught teens essential skills in cooking and food literacy by utilizing a mobile kitchen-style classroom based at Brighton Beach Library as well as at Central and Cypress Hills libraries. "Teens can really eat. Really. We often had to double our recipes! It also became imminently clear that teaching teens to cook builds community, essential skills and their love for the library," she says.

Adeeba believes the benefits of BKLYN Incubator ripple across BPL. "I feel so excited to create proposals that fill a need that I see in my community, but I am always more excited to see how many different ideas come into play across the system. Library workers really pay attention to their community and find creative solutions—then, Brynna and her team help turn those solutions into viable options for staff to experiment with."

## Adeeba Rana, Senior Young Adult Librarian at Brighton Beach Library,

is a veteran BKLYN Incubator participant, having proposed and implemented three different projects over the past few years. "Having an outlet through which I can make direct change and measure the impact of my work has been a vital part of what has kept me resilient and motivated for the past three years at BPL. I love that BKLYN Incubator gives library workers a venue to create the projects that can elevate the conversations in their communities."

In 2018, her program **Brighton Beach Bridges and Coney Island Causeways** provided arts-based cultural competency training for staff and branch partners at Brighton Beach and Coney Island libraries, enabling staff to better engage library users, cultivate unity and celebrate the complex diversity of Brighton Beach and Coney Island. "After our training," she says, "we employed our learning to create more nuanced programming—with great results! Attendance for our programs was more robust and more diverse; reflective of our



➔ To learn more about the program visit [bklynlibrary.org/incubator-submissions](https://bklynlibrary.org/incubator-submissions)



# KNOW A TEEN IN BROOKLYN?

They should check out BPL's new **Best Buy Teen Tech Center (BBTTC)** at **Kings Highway Library** where they can create a video, lay down tracks in a music studio, produce images and videos with digital cameras, or learn how to create advanced photoshop effects! The BBTTC opened in March 2019 and is the first of its kind in all of New York City's five boroughs.

Located at Kings Highway Library and designed exclusively for kids ages 13-18, this interactive learning space includes multiple computer workstations, collaboration areas, a sewing station and an array of technical equipment as well as its own music studio. Many teens also use the BBTTC as a safe space for schoolwork, using its vast array of resources to complete their assignments. In addition, the Center's partnership in The Clubhouse Network offers access to a community of teens in over 100 clubhouses in 20 countries, allowing them to share their projects with youth from around the world.

The BBTTC has become a hub for teen creativity. Teens produce original music, design video animation, participate in weekly **BKLYN Robotics League** workshops, and construct video games and mobile applications. Teens also use

the space to write and illustrate original poetry, stories and films, and build kinetic sculptures and robotic constructions using the 3D printer. The music studio has become very popular and one of the teens who attends regularly has become the *de facto* studio "engineer," helping with set-up, demonstrating equipment and assisting with the creation of rhythmic tracks. In addition, BPL's own roster of **T4 interns** (teens who have completed intensive technology training and serve as branch volunteers) offer weekly workshops that cover topics as diverse as Java coding, chess and origami.

**States frequent teen attendee Vic Blunnie, "Coming to the BBTTC I've been able to learn and try a lot of things I haven't had the opportunity to do before."**

BPL is delighted with the success of the BBTTC at Kings Highway Library, which is the first of nearly a dozen teen-specific spaces planned for BPL branches across the borough.

The Best Buy Teen Tech Center is made possible by the Best Buy Foundation and ERI. Support is also provided by New York State Senator Simcha Felder and Earle Muroff. Wifi is powered by Optimum by Altice.

➔ To learn more visit [bklynlib.org/teen-tech-center](http://bklynlib.org/teen-tech-center)

## BPL PRESENTS

Unless otherwise noted all events take place in Central Library's Dr. S. Stevan Dweck Cultural Center.

# The 28TH Amendment

BPL Presents invites the public to help draft the **28th Amendment of the Constitution**. Through a series of Town Hall-style forums held at library branches, correctional facilities and high schools, Brooklynites of all ages and backgrounds will come together to discuss and debate the issues that they believe the amendment should address. The amendment, written by our Framers, will reflect the aspirations and collective will of the people of Brooklyn.

➔ Visit [bklynlib.org/28th-amendment](http://bklynlib.org/28th-amendment) to learn more about the process and find a Town Hall near you.





# University Open Air

## WINTER SEMESTER

### Bedford Library

The second semester of **University Open Air** kicks off this winter indoors at Brooklyn Public Library. University Open Air is a space for foreign-born scholars to share their knowledge and experience with fellow community members, neighbors and friends. Courses will be offered in the sciences and humanities, as well as other disciplines. The classes will take place over a span of two weeks and will be free and open to all. *Please note, while UOA courses aim to equip students with valuable skills, they are non-accredited.*

Check [bklynlibrary.org/university-open-air](http://bklynlibrary.org/university-open-air) for information.



## TO LIVE / ÊTRE VIVANT A NIGHT OF PHILOSOPHY & IDEAS 2020

Saturday, Feb. 1 – Sunday, Feb. 2, 7 pm – 7 am

A Night of Philosophy & Ideas 2020 is a 12-hour marathon showcasing contemporary philosophical thought through intellectual talks and debates, specially commissioned art installations, live performances, and film and video screenings that explore philosophy in playful and provocative ways. It is co-presented by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy.



## MESSAGE FROM THE LIBRARY BILL T. JONES: *AT RISK*

Sunday, April 5, 7 pm  
Grand Lobby

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



Toni Morrison: *The Pieces I Am*

# LITFILM

## A FILM FESTIVAL ABOUT WRITERS

Tuesday, March 17 – Sunday, March 22  
Dweck Center

In the third edition of LitFilm, BPL's popular film festival about writers, audience members will get an inside look at writers' lives, artistic processes and political struggles through inspiring documentaries and films. The weeklong event will comprise of panel discussions and talkbacks with many of the filmmakers and writers featured, including an appearance by **Toni Morrison: *The Pieces I Am*** director Timothy Greenfield-Sanders. LitFilm is made possible by support from **WarnerMedia**.

Check [bklynlibrary.org/litfilm](http://bklynlibrary.org/litfilm) for information.

## EXHIBITION

# STARS DOWN TO EARTH

Through March 13  
Central Library

From wonders of the cosmos to urgent questions around habitable futures on Earth, this exhibition brings together the scientific inquiries and complex visual systems of artists **Dario Robleto** and **Mary Mattingly**. Mary Mattingly is the 2020 Katowitz Radin Artist-in-Residence.



# THE REVIEW PANEL

Tuesday, Feb. 11, 7 pm

Wednesday, Mar. 11, 7 pm

Wednesday, Apr. 15, 7 pm

Dweck Center

Leading art critics join moderator David Cohen in lively debate about current exhibitions around the five boroughs. Presented in association with Artcritical.

For complete listings visit:  
➔ [bklynlibrary.org/bpl-presents](http://bklynlibrary.org/bpl-presents)





**CARNEGIE HALL CITYWIDE  
CONCERT SERIES  
DAVID KRAKAUER &  
KATHLEEN TAGG  
BREATH & HAMMER**

**Sunday, March 1, 4 pm  
Dweck Center**

Influences of world music, jazz, classical, experimental techniques and electronics blend together in this unique collaboration.

## CLASSICAL INTERLUDES

**Sundays at 4 pm  
Dweck Center**

**Ayane Kozasa,  
Melissa Reardon,  
Raman Ramakrishnan &  
Paul Wiancko  
Feb. 9**

**Echoes of Rhythm: A Tribute  
to Randy Weston with Min  
Xiao-Fen, Maalam Hassan  
Benjaafar & Alex Blake  
Feb. 16**

**Cassatt String Quartet with  
guest Peter Weitzner  
March 15**



**Sybarite 5  
March 29**

*No children under six will  
be permitted.*



**GREEN SERIES  
ARONOFF, BATTISTONI,  
COHEN & RIOFRANCOS ON  
A PLANET TO WIN**

**Thursday, April 30, 6:30 pm  
Greenpoint Library**

In the 21st century, all politics are climate politics. The age of climate gradualism is over, as unprecedented disasters are exacerbated by inequalities of race and class.

**ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S PRESENTS  
MUSIC IN COLOR:  
ELEANOR ALBERGA**

**Saturday, April 25, 4 pm  
Dweck Center**

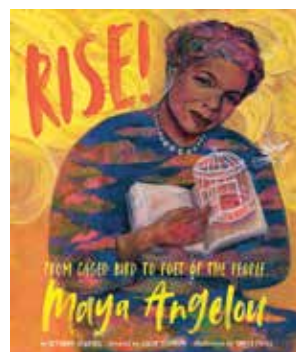
A British composer of Jamaican descent, Alberga is prolific in nearly every genre, from opera and choral works to pieces for both chamber ensemble and full orchestra.

# EVENTS

**PERFECTLY PENGUIN BY  
WILDLIFE THEATER**

**Saturday, Jan. 25, 1 pm  
Dweck Center**

What can WE do to protect the planet? Find out when Wildlife Theater takes participants into our oceans to explore cause & effect.



**BOOK LAUNCH**

**RISE! FROM CAGED BIRD TO POET  
OF THE PEOPLE, MAYA ANGELOU  
AUTHOR BETHANY HEGEDUS &  
ILLUSTRATOR TONYA ENGEL**

**Saturday, Feb. 8, 1 pm  
Dweck Center**

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the publication of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

**LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION  
NAI-NI CHEN DANCE COMPANY**

**Saturday, Feb. 15, 1 pm  
Dweck Center**

A colorful and vibrant production of dance and music to delight the whole family.

# FOR YOUTH & FAMILIES



**¡MIL GRACIAS! THE ART AND  
ILLUSTRATION OF JOHN PARRA**

**Through April 13  
Youth Wing**

Parra's artwork celebrates the resplendent fabric of Latino culture, with stories about its important heroes, its visual traditions of mural-making and artisanal craft, its food, and of course the beauty of the Spanish language.

**90-SECOND NEWBERY  
FILM FESTIVAL**

**Saturday, Feb. 22, 1 pm  
Dweck Center**

Kid filmmakers create weird short movies that tell the entire stories of Newbery Award-winning books in about 90 seconds.



**KOTCHEGNA:  
DANCE TRADITIONS FROM  
IVORY COAST**

**Saturday, Feb. 29, 1 pm  
Dweck Center**

Dancers performing in elaborate masks to the explosive percussion of a corps of brilliant drummers.

**BEE PARKS & THE HORNETS**

**Saturday, March 7, 1 pm  
Dweck Center**

The Hornets perform high-energy shows that combine rockin' music, puppetry, and audience participation.



**COMIC CON**

**Saturday, March 14, 1 pm  
Dweck Center**

Children, Teens, and Adults are welcome to celebrate the universality in comics and pop-nerd culture.

**THE CAT IN THE HAT BY THE  
NATIONAL THEATRE**

**Saturday, March 28, 1 pm  
Dweck Center**

Everyone's favorite cat comes to mischievous life in this theatrical adaptation of the Dr. Seuss classic.





Brooklyn Public Library gratefully acknowledges the many donors who have provided generous support for BPL Presents programs, including: Cheryl and George Haywood Endowment for Cultural Diversity, The Kahn Endowment for Humanities Programs, Dr. Beverly S. Jacobs, Janet Anderson, Todd Ferguson, The Miriam Katowitz and Arthur Radin Fund, Los Blancos, Mapleton Endowment, New York State Council on the Arts, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, Sandra and Peter Schubert Endowment Fund, Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, The Weissman Family Foundation, Inc., Cultural Services of the French Embassy, City Point, WarnerMedia, the Estate of Pearl S. Reuillard in memory of her parents Yetta and Louis Schwartz and many other generous supporters.

Programs are also supported by Brooklyn Public Library's Fund for the Humanities which was established through the generous support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, The Hearst Foundation, Inc., Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, The Starr Foundation, the Leon and Muriel Gilbert Charitable Trust, Henry and Lucy Moses Fund, Inc. and a gift in memory of Samuel and Pauline Wine.

WNYC is a media partner of the 2020 BPL Presents Season.



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Brooklyn Public Library gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our corporate donors (fiscal year 2019–2020).

#### Storytime at Bedford Library







**Central Library**

10 Grand Army Plaza  
Brooklyn, NY 11238

For more information visit [\*\*\*bklynlibrary.org\*\*\*](http://bklynlibrary.org)



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