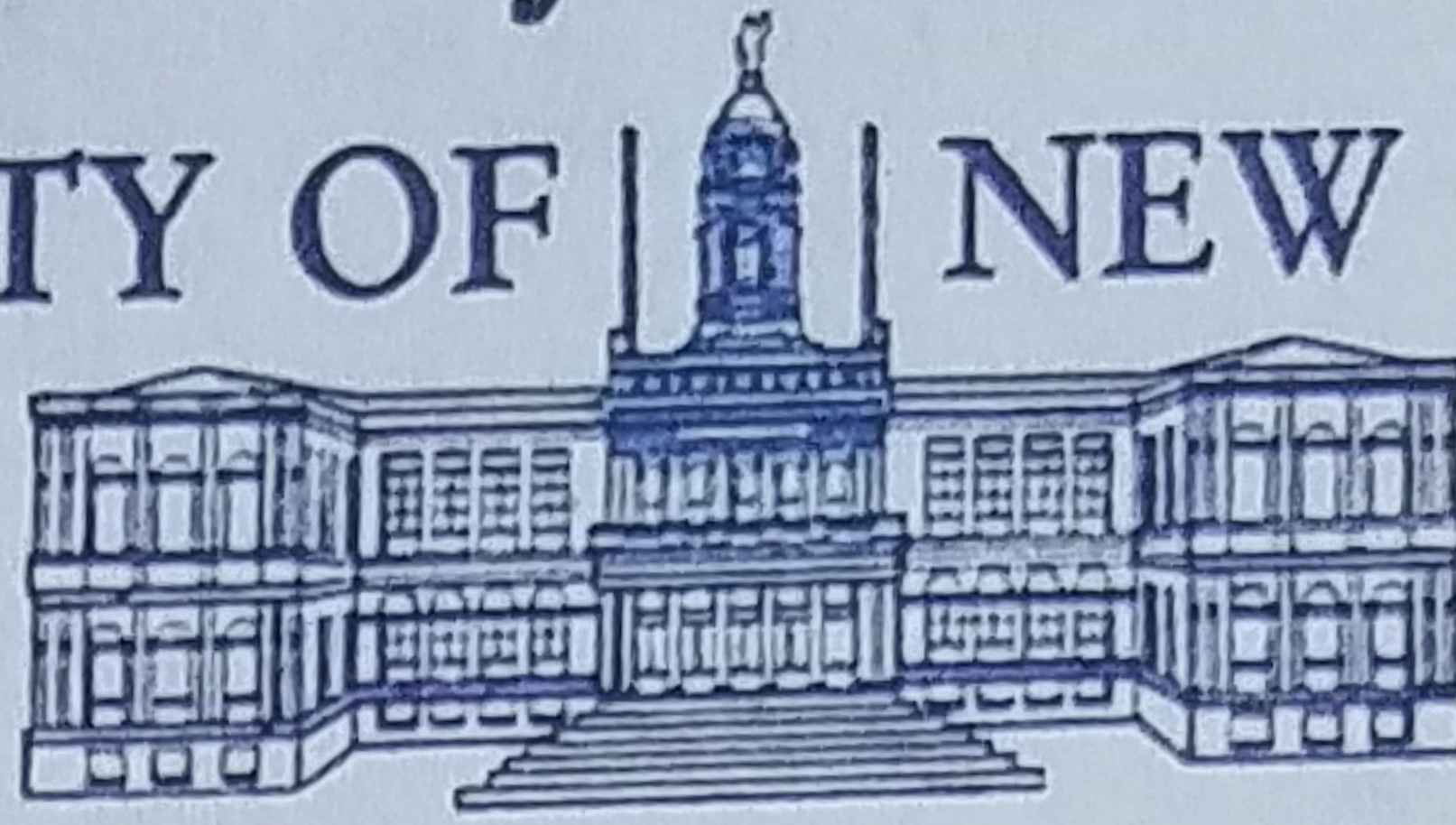


Office of the Mayor

CITY OF NEW YORK



Proclamation

WHEREAS:

THE CREATIVE ENERGY THAT DEFINES THE FIVE BOROUGHES HAS LONG INSPIRED PEOPLE FROM ACROSS THE WORLD, AND GENERATIONS OF DIVERSE ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS HAVE FLOCKED TO OUR CITY AND SHAPED OUR CULTURAL LANDSCAPE. AS A TRAILBLAZING AFRICAN AMERICAN VOCALIST, PIANIST, AND MUSIC EDUCATOR, THE LATE SYLVIA OLDEN LEE IS AMONG THIS GROUP OF INFLUENTIAL PERFORMERS WHO ADVANCED THE MUSIC SCENE IN THE FIVE BOROUGHES AND BEYOND. TONIGHT, ON WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN LEE'S 100TH BIRTHDAY, NEW YORKERS AND PERFORMING ARTISTS OF ALL BACKGROUNDS WILL CELEBRATE HER LIFE AND LEGACY DURING A CONCERT AT CARNEGIE HALL, HOSTED BY THE FOUNDATION FOR THE REVIVAL OF CLASSICAL CULTURE, THE SCHILLER INSTITUTE, AND HARLEM OPERA THEATER.

WHEREAS:

BORN IN 1917, SYLVIA OLDEN LEE WAS RAISED IN MISSISSIPPI BY PARENTS WHO WERE GIFTED MUSICIANS, AND SHE BEGAN LEARNING PIANO AT AGE FIVE. EQUIPPED WITH IMMENSE NATURAL TALENT, SHE WENT ON TO STUDY PIANO AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY AND AT AGE 16 SHE WAS INVITED TO PERFORM AT THE WHITE HOUSE FOR FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT'S INAUGURATION. LEE ALSO EXCELLED AS A VOCALIST AND SHE POSSESSED A DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUALS. IN 1954, LEE BECAME THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN PROFESSIONAL HIRED BY NEW YORK'S METROPOLITAN OPERA, WHERE SHE WORKED FOR MANY YEARS AS A VOCAL COACH AND PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN COORDINATING THE GROUNDBREAKING DEBUT OF MARIAN ANDERSON AT THE MET. DURING HER LONG AND SUCCESSFUL PROFESSIONAL CAREER, LEE ACCOMPANIED AND COACHED SINGERS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE, AND SHE WORKED WITH MANY INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED ARTISTS, AMONG THEM PAUL ROBESON, JESSYE NORMAN, KATHLEEN BATTLE, AND ROBERT MCFERRIN.

WHEREAS:

AS A DEDICATED VOCAL COACH AND A PASSIONATE MUSIC EDUCATOR, LEE WAS A MENTOR TO GENERATIONS OF YOUNG ARTISTS, AND HER LEGACY CONTINUES TO INSPIRE EMERGING AND ESTABLISHED MUSICIANS IN THE FIVE BOROUGHES AND BEYOND. THROUGH HER HARD WORK, ENTHUSIASM, PHENOMENAL TALENT, AND ENCYCLOPEDIC KNOWLEDGE OF SPIRITUALS AND CLASSICAL MUSIC, LEE MADE TREMENDOUS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLD OF MUSIC, AND AS A PIONEERING AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTIST, SHE FOSTERED DIVERSITY IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR, PAVING THE WAY FOR OTHERS. AS YOU GATHER TONIGHT TO ENJOY AN EVENING OF PERFORMANCES IN SYLVIA OLDEN LEE'S HONOR, CHIRLANE AND I ARE PLEASED TO JOIN IN PAYING TRIBUTE TO AN OUTSTANDING ARTIST WHO SHAPED THE HISTORY OF MUSIC IN NEW YORK AND AROUND THE WORLD.

NOW THEREFORE, I, BILL DE BLASIO, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM THURSDAY, JUNE 29TH, 2017 IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK AS:

"SYLVIA OLDEN LEE DAY"



BILL DE BLASIO
MAYOR