

## FELA! TO BE HONORED BY NEW YORK CITY

Thursday, July 29, 2010

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FELA!  
THE TONY AWARD-WINNING BROADWAY MUSICAL  
FOR BEST CHOREOGRAPHY

BASED ON THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF FELA ANIKULAPO-KUTI

TO BE HONORED BY NYC COUNCIL MEMBERS  
JIMMY VAN BRAMER & JULISSA FERRERAS  
AND SPEAKER CHRISTINE QUINN

AT NEW YORK CITY HALL ON

THURSDAY, JULY 29

July 29, 2010 (New York, NY) – The cast and crew of the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical Fela!, based on the life and music of groundbreaking African composer, performer and activist Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, will be honored by New York City Council Members Jimmy Van Bramer and Julissa Ferreras on the Steps of City Hall on Thursday, July 29. The Fela! company will receive a Proclamation from the City of New York by Speaker Christine Quinn and Council Members Van Bramer and Ferreras in front of the entire City Council.

"Hats off to the cast, crew and creative team of Broadway's Fela! for their inspirational portrayal of legendary Nigerian musician Fela Kuti," said Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer. "Kuti's story inspired a nation and his music inspired the world – it is an honor to recognize such an extraordinary production for their positive contributions to New York City and the American theatre."

Fela!, presented by Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter and Will & Jada Pinkett Smith, is currently playing at Broadway's Eugene O'Neill Theatre (230 West 49th Street). The production received three 2010 Tony Awards, including Best Choreography, Best Costume Design and Best Sound Design. Fela! opened to rave reviews on November 23.

This new musical is directed and choreographed by Tony Award-winner Bill T. Jones, with a book by Jim Lewis and Bill T. Jones. Sahr Ngaujah (2010 Tony Award-nominee for Best Actor in a Musical) and Kevin Mambo play the title character at alternate performances, while the world renowned Antibalas and other members of the NYC Afrobeat community, under the direction of Aaron Johnson, perform Kuti's rousing music live onstage. Fela! was conceived by Bill T. Jones, Jim Lewis and Stephen Hendel. Fela! had its world premiere at Off-Broadway's 37 Arts in September 2008, where it enjoyed a sold-out limited run. Tickets for Fela! on Broadway are available through [www.Telecharge.com](http://www.Telecharge.com), by calling (212) 239-6200 or in-person at The Eugene O'Neill Box Office, located at 230 West 49th Street.

Fela!, the true story of the legendary Nigerian musician Fela Kuti whose soulful Afrobeat rhythms ignited a generation, is a triumphant tale of courage, passion and love, featuring Kuti's captivating music and the visionary direction and choreography of Tony Award-winner Bill T. Jones. Inspired by his mother, a civil rights champion, Kuti defied a corrupt and oppressive military government and devoted his life and music to the struggle for freedom and human dignity.

Upon its November 23 opening, Ben Brantley of The New York Times wrote, "The hot (and seriously cool) energy that comes from the musical gospel preached by the title character of Fela! feels as if it could stretch easily to the borders of Manhattan and then across a river or two. There has never been anything on Broadway like this production." The New York Post's Elisabeth Vincentelli cheered, "There's enough energy to short circuit Con Ed." David Cote of Time Out New York, in giving it 5 stars (out of 5) raved, "Fela! is more than a musical; it's an ecstatic phenomenon." And Jennifer Farrar from the AP exclaimed, "An exuberant celebration!"

Fela! features an international cast led by Tony-nominee Sahr Ngaujah and Kevin Mambo (MTC's Ruined), alternating in the role of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti. Tony Award-winner Lillias White (2010 Tony-nominee for Best Supporting Actress in a Musical) plays Funmilayo Anikulapo-Kuti (Fela's mother) and Saycon Sengbloh (Hair) plays Sandra, Kuti's love interest. The company also includes Corey Baker, Hettie Vyrine Barnhill, Lauren DeVeaux, Nicole Chantal DeWeever, Elasea Douglas, Rujeko Dumbutshena, Catherine Foster, Rasaan-Elijah "Talu" Green, Shaneeka Harrell, Chanon Judson, Abena Koomson, Ismael Kouyate, Gelan Lambert, Farai Malianga, Shakira Marshall, Afi McClendon, Adesola Osakalumi, Jeffrey Page, Justin Prescott, Ryan H. Rankine, Daniel Soto, Jill M. Vallery, J.L. Williams, Iris Wilson, Aimee Graham Wodobode. Scenic and costume design is by 2010 Tony Award-winner Marina Draghici, lighting design is by Rob Wierzel (2010 Tony-nominee for Best Lighting Design of a Musical), sound design is by 2010 Tony Award-winner Rob Kaplowitz and projection design is by Peter Nigrini. Musical arrangements and additional music by Aaron Johnson and Jordan McLean, and Jim Lewis provided additional lyrics.

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