

## 2019-K795

Assembly Resolution No. 795

BY: M. of A. Aubry

CELEBRATING the life and accomplishments of James E. Heath, gifted musician, prolific composer and arranger, and influential educator

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to honor and pay just tribute to those musical geniuses whose commitment and creative talents contributed to the entertainment and cultural enrichment of their community and the entire State of New York; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is moved this day to memorialize the purposeful life and career of James E. Heath, a prominent figure in the history of jazz music, who died in Loganville, Georgia, on Sunday, January 19, 2020, at the age of 93; and

WHEREAS, James Edward Heath was born to clarinetist, Percy, and singer, Arlethia Heath on October 25, 1926, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; following in his parent's footsteps, he began playing the alto saxophone at the young age of 14; and

WHEREAS, James E. Heath soon became a prominent fixture in the jazz circles of late 1940s Philadelphia, and was nicknamed "Little Bird" for his small stature and as a nod to his mentor, bebop pioneer Charlie "Bird" Parker; and

WHEREAS, During this time, James E. Heath taught himself to read and compose music, and before long, he was creating melodies for a 16-piece band of his own; and

WHEREAS, At the age of 22, James E. Heath moved to New York, and reinvented his sound by switching to the tenor saxophone, thereby producing a deeper, richer sound; and

WHEREAS, Just as his career began to flourish, James E. Heath went through a period of great turmoil in the mid-1950s; after overcoming much adversity, he married the former Mona Brown, and together, the couple moved to Corona, Queens; and

WHEREAS, With a renewed purpose, James E. Heath did some freelance arranging work, released six albums on the Riverside label, and eventually became a staff arranger for the record company; and

WHEREAS, In 1964, James E. Heath took a departure from recording, and became a founding faculty member of Jazzmobile, an organization which presented concerts and classes to young people in Harlem, New York; and

WHEREAS, Ten years later, James E. Heath and his brothers, Percy and Albert "Tootie" formed the Heath Brothers, and later, received a Grammy nomination for its album Live at the Public Theater; and

WHEREAS, During the 1980s, James E. Heath wrote and composed music, developed a graduate program of jazz studies at Queens College, and organized and led the annual Queens Jazz Orchestra Concert for 12 years; and

WHEREAS, In later years, James E. Heath wrote, arranged and performed as a soloist on Little Man, Big Band, and appeared on more than 100 recordings; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, a documentary about James E. Heath and his brothers, "Brotherly Jazz," was released, and four years later, he published his autobiography, "I Walked With Giants"; and

WHEREAS, For his profound impact in the progression of jazz music, James E. Heath was the recipient of numerous awards and accolades including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Jazz Foundation of America; he also received an honorary doctorate in music from the Julliard School of Music, was nominated for two additional Grammy awards, and was named the 2003 American Jazz Master by the Jazz Foundation of America; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by his son, Jeffrey, and his brother, Percy, James E. Heath is survived by his wife of almost 60 years, Mona; one son, James Mtume; one daughter, Roslyn Heath-Cammorto; one brother, Albert Heath; seven grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren; as well as numerous fans, fellow musicians, and jazz lovers from across the globe; and

WHEREAS, An inspiration to many, it is the intent of this Legislative Body to inscribe upon its records this loving tribute to the memory of jazz music legend James E. Heath, that future generations may know and appreciate his extraordinary and innovative career, and the respect and esteem in which he was held; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the life and accomplishments of James E. Heath, gifted musician, prolific composer and arranger, and influential educator; and

be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of James E. Heath.