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IN MEMORIAM

TITO PUENTE

By the Entire Council

Whereas, The Council of the City of New York celebrates the life and mourns the death of one of New York's great legends, the innovator, percussionist, bandleader and consummate showman, Tito Puente; and

Whereas, El Rey, or the King, as Tito Puente was commonly known, recorded 118 records and won five Grammys during his tremendous five-decade-career in music; he was a tireless performer, working 200 to 300 performances a year even in recent years; and

Whereas, Tito Puente, who brought his trademark timbale-fueled mambo sound to generations, is considered the most important Latin musician of the last half century and one of the most influential leaders in the Latin jazz movement; and

Whereas, The mightiest of the "Mambo Kings," as he was depicted in the 1992 eponymous movie, Tito Puente, a native of El Barrio used the clubs and concert halls of New York City as his Latin music laboratory, orchestrating legendary performances at the Palladium and at the Village Gate, where he was a staple of the Salsa Meets Jazz series; and

Whereas, Tito Puente began playing drums at a very early age and got his big break performing with the Machito Orchestra during the 1940's, one of the first bands to fuse jazz and Latin; and

Whereas, After serving in no less than nine battles as a U.S. Navy serviceman during World War II, Tito Puente returned to New York to study at the Julliard School of Music, but Mr. Puente always considered performing with his band his most useful venture in music education; and

Whereas, In 1948, he started his own band, the Piccadilly Boys, which he later changed to the famous Tito Puente Orchestra, which recorded mambo hits like "Abaniquito," "Barbarabatiri," "El Rey del Timbal," "Mambo Gallego," and in 1963, "Oye Como Va," which was later recorded by Carlos Santana; and

Whereas, Tito Puente both distinguished his band and elevated the stage presence of his instrument of choice by putting the percussion at the front of the stage; the rearrangement was a success and had been mimicked by numerous bands in the years to follow; and

Whereas, Throughout his career, Tito Puente performed and recorded with the world's great Latin and jazz musicians, always bringing his ceaseless energy, jovial smile and seemingly infinite range of talent to every session and every gig; and

Whereas, Nowhere is Tito Puente more appreciated than right here in New York City, the city that his parents adopted after migrating from Puerto Rico and the city that Mr. Puente both loved and helped to make a better place, marching Puerto Rican Day Parades and investing in neighborhoods like City Island, where he opened his popular seafood restaurant; and

Whereas, Tito Puente was a singular figure in American music of the 20th Century and will be fondly remembered as a great musician, composer and New Yorker; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York celebrates the life and mourns the death of Tito Puente, expresses its deepest sympathies to his family and friends and adjourns today in his honor.