



DANCING IN THE STREETS PRESENTS
DANCING THROUGH THE BRONX
Why Green Spaces?

Bronx, NY (7/18/14) – The idea for a dance festival in green spaces of the Bronx evolved from Dancing in the Streets’ 30-year history and from our 3-year strategic commitment to produce free public performances that enhance and promote positive aspects of the Bronx.

DANCING IN THE STREETS’ 30-YEAR HISTORY

Since Dancing in the Streets was founded in 1984, we have produced over 400 FREE dance, interdisciplinary, and site-specific performances in unexpected public spaces, such as a grain silo in Red Hook; an airplane hanger in Floyd Bennett Field; Fort Jay on Governors Island; and countless green spaces throughout New York City, including community gardens; Central Park; and other city parks in Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx.

DANCING IN THE STREETS’ MOVE TO THE BRONX

Upon moving to the South Bronx in 2011, Dancing in the Streets made a strategic commitment to apply our 30-year legacy towards reclaiming, revitalizing, and promoting **natural, architectural, and cultural treasures** of the Bronx by producing free, high profile, scalable, community-based public performances:

- That have a significant impact on the borough’s cultural, environmental, and economic development; and
- That we produce in partnership with organizations and businesses that are deeply embedded in the Bronx, and recognize and support the ways in which the arts can further their community building and economic development goals.

BRONX CULTURAL TREASURES

Dancing in the Streets’ first Bronx initiative focused on the borough’s **cultural treasures**. In collaboration with Casita Maria Center for Arts and Education, we developed, and are co-producers of, the still ongoing *South Bronx Culture Trail*, through which we commissioned and produced two large-scale productions focusing on the rich cultural history of the South Bronx:

1. **Paseo (2012)**: a site-specific work celebrating the contribution of the South Bronx to Latin music and dance, which featured performances by a cast of 80 on fire escapes, sidewalks, building ledges, and in the middle of 11 city streets in Hunts Point and Longwood.
2. **The Bronx Revolution & the Birth Of Hip Hop (2013)**, a multimedia performance about the origins of hip hop in the South Bronx featuring live performances and a video landscape comprised of archival photos and video footage of the South Bronx in the 1970s.

BRONX ARCHITECTURAL & NATURAL TREASURES

In 2013, in keeping with Dancing in the Streets’ historic focus on public performances that open “New Yorkers’ eyes to spectacular vistas around the city.” (*The Village Voice*), for our second

Bronx-based initiative, we began a double search: a) for spectacular vistas and significant **natural** and **architectural treasures** of the Bronx; and b) for strategic partners with a vested interest in gardens and parks or architectural masterpieces in the borough.

Whereas, we are still in the process of exploring several collaborative projects with multiple Bronx partners, the idea for *Dancing Through the Bronx* coalesced through exploratory conversations with Wave Hill and Bronx Pro Real Estate Management. The project's concept matched perfectly with both organizations' strategic goals, and the August 2014 timing coincided with their strategic plans:

- Wave Hill was eager to expand its successful "Sunset Wednesdays" summer dance series; and both Wave Hill and Dancing in the Streets were interested in resuming our former 11-year partnership for *Dances for Wave Hill* (1991-2001), our collaborative dance series.
- Bronx Pro was eager to add dance to the vibrant artistic life of its new Hayden Lord Park, which embeds artwork by professional artists and Bronx youth in the park's structures. During a meeting with Peter Magistro, Bronx Pro's founding president and the driving force behind the creation of Hayden Lord Park, we decided to: a) create a 3-performance festival in three green spaces of varying sizes and composition: b) to call the festival *Dancing Through the Bronx*; and c) to use the festival to promote the Bronx as home to a variety of green havens of nature, beauty, contemplation, and recreation.

Dancing in the Streets then invited Westchester Square BID and BAAD! as the third and fourth festival partners who are co-presenting the performance at Owen Dolen Park. Our goal is to expand the series over time to include many more green spaces of the Bronx.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THREE GREEN SPACES

Whereas Wave Hill is the largest and most spectacular of the three green spaces, Bronx Pro and Westchester Square BID are dedicated to developing Hayden Lord Park and Owen Dolen Park, respectively, as vibrant and significant cultural and recreational hubs of their respective communities.

In addition to promoting the three parks' lawns, trees, and flower beds, our overarching goal is that *Dancing Through the Bronx* will also serve as a catalyst for community members to come together in a shared, dynamic, and communal artistic experience. At all three sites, audience members will be invited to gather together to enjoy their park, see innovative dance, and participate in the cipher (freestyle dance circle) that will end each program. In addition, each presenting partner has begun to recruit 24 community members of all ages (from 4 to 104) and all physical, mental, and emotional abilities to participate in Larry Keigwin's "Let's Make a Dance" workshop. Workshop participants will take part in games and improvisational exercises that are geared to gently guide them to discover their own creativity and physicality, and prepare them to perform in the *Dancing Through the Bronx* public performance in their park.

Dancing Through the Bronx will reach ethnically and demographically diverse Bronx populations. The majority of the audiences and community participants are low to moderate income Hispanics and African American Bronx residents. Other populations served include Russian and East European residents of Riverdale and Westchester (Wave Hill), South Asian immigrants and residents in a facility for mentally challenged adults (Westchester Square), and Dominican Republic immigrants (Bronx Pro).