

Battery Dance Company Presents



Omar Edwards, Chinese Folk Dance Company, and Sidiki Condé at Chase Plaza photo: Richard Termine

The 21st Annual Downtown Dance Festival Report 2002

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Battery Dance Company formed partnerships with downtown-based dance companies under the banner of the Downtown Dance Festival, to play a critical role in enhancing and rebuilding the cultural life of their community post-9/11. The Ballet Folklórico Mexicano, Chen & Dancers, Chinese Folk Dance Company, Dha Fuzion, Jane Goldberg Changing Times Tap and Friends and Tokounou All Ability African Dance danced their hearts out and the audiences responded with fervor, making the 21st Annual Downtown Dance Festival the strongest ever.

Battery Dance Company's Downtown Dance Festival is New York City's longest-running free outdoor dance series, and has showcased over 140 dance companies to date. Battery designed the Festival as a free public open-air presentation, at once attracting a diverse audience and offering performances by a wide cross-section of dance companies within the grandeur of downtown Manhattan's parks, plazas and piers.

Whether against the backdrop of plane trees at Battery Park or skyscrapers at Chase Plaza, audiences at the 21st Annual Downtown Dance Festival embarked on an odyssey through Mexico, China, Thailand, Japan, Africa, and India. The Downtown Dance Festival was living proof of the oft-quoted statement that dance is the universal language, and in this special circumstance, contributed to the healing of the community as a whole.

This year's Festival attracted over 7,500 people, welcoming New York City's residents



and visitors back to the now accessible, safe and clean public spaces of Lower Manhattan. In planning this year's festival, Battery selected local performers that have played a vital role in contributing to the cultural life of Downtown New York. Each of the selected companies not only demonstrated their ability to entertain audiences, but also showed how dance can enrich the lives we live. Festival audiences were able to see experimental dance forms as well as

view historical expressions of dance that have been passed on throughout the generations.

Jonathan Hollander, Director and Founder of Battery Dance Company said, “The Lower Manhattan focus of our Festival this year yielded surprise: the broadest panorama of dance ever. The Chinese Folk Dance Company displayed a level of virtuosity, elegance and scope that one could only call “World Class”, and the brilliant African and Mexican dance troupes selected by our neighbors, the esteemed Center for Traditional Music & Dance, plucked heartstrings with their mixture of power and grace. Jane Goldberg brought us the contrasting tap talents of Roxane Butterfly and Omar Edwards. Dha Fuzion offered its recipe of world music and dance, deftly presented by master chef Akim “Funk Buddha”. Another recipe of fusion, Asian –American style, was presented by H.T. Chen & Dancers. As the hosts and producers of the Festival, all of us at Battery Dance Company were proud to see the way in which downtown audiences flocked to the Festival this year, and to see the level of artistry provided by our downtown artistic neighbors.”

Downtown Dance Festival Performances at Battery Park and Chase Plaza

“Stout plane trees offered shade and light sparkled on the waves of the harbor beyond the stage in Battery Park, where the Downtown Dance Festival commenced on Sunday. Less than a year ago, the gray residue of 9/11 blanketed this park at the southern tip of Manhattan, but now its gentle beauty has revived.” –Robert Johnson, “Gait keepers: Downtown Dance Festival a Showcase of Cultural Diversity”, NY Post (see enclosed article)

Battery Park

The cultural mosaic of New York City was illustrated in the faces of audiences at the 21st Annual Downtown Dance Festival in Battery Park. Groups ranging from the very young to the very old enjoyed this open air performance, set against the backdrop of a now very bright and beautiful downtown public space. Cheering on the performances was a scooter patrol from the local precinct, an Indian family picnicking, and couples strolling through the park, as well as New Yorkers from all corners of the world coming together to celebrate dance. During the set up of the event people were taking pictures, watching the companies rehearse, and clapping along with the music.

Sunday, August 25, 2002

Performances in Battery Park from 2pm to 5pm opened the six-day festival. After being rained out on the originally scheduled opening day, Saturday, August 24th, the Festival was greeted with clear skies and temperate weather. Both the Mexican and Chinese communities were in high attendance bolstering the performances of the **Ballet Folklorico Mexicano** (curated by The Center for Traditional Music and Dance), **Chen & Dancers**, and the culturally diverse **Dha Fuzion**. The performances drew crowds to the bleachers, chairs, and the surrounding lawn as well as beyond the park’s fence.



Ballet Folklórico Mexicano & Dha Fuzion, Battery Park, 2002 Photo: Christopher Butt

Chase Plaza

At Chase Plaza, the cultural mosaic shifted like a kaleidoscope, showing businessmen and woman shoulder to shoulder with construction workers and community members eating their lunch. At each venue, the same faces could be spotted from the program's beginning to end, while a constant stream of passers-by stopped to watch. Each dance company appealed to a different demographic group of Lower Manhattan, yet reached out to welcome and engage ALL onlookers. "JPMorgan is proud of our long-standing support of the arts and our great cultural institutions, such as Battery Dance Company, that made this year's Festival so wonderful," said John M. Imperiale, Senior Vice President, Director of Community Relations at JPMorgan Chase.

Monday, August 26, 2002

Dha Fuzion opened the Downtown Dance Festival's week-long lunchtime performance series at Chase Plaza. This group is culturally diverse in their membership as well as in their unique performance style, woven from various cultural and artistic threads ranging from Mongolian throat singing to hip hop dance to tap dance. Through story telling devices Akim Funk Buddha, Artistic Director, communicated his philosophy of the importance of unity and understanding among ALL people. Joining **Dha Fuzion** on-stage, for a final encore, was a construction worker clad in heavy boots and worn-out painter's pants, a business woman in heels, and a group of children all dancing and singing together.

Tuesday, August 27, 2002

Returning to Chase Plaza nearly twenty years after their first Downtown Dance Festival performance in 1984, **Jane Goldberg Changing Times Tap & Friends** brought live music and tap dance back to the public stage. Providing the audience with *Dance Magazine's* award-winner, Roxane Butterfly ("BeauteeZ'n The Beat"), and Omar Edwards (original cast member from "Bring in Da Noise Bring in Da Funk") and jazz singer Danny Weizman. Edwards challenged Butterfly to a tap face-off as the crowd cheered them on. The combination of Jane Goldberg's song & tap comedy routine and Danny Weizman's crooning drew a mature audience who recognized old show-tunes and ballads.



Jane Goldberg Changing Times Tap & Friends Chase Plaza, 2002 Photo: Richard Termine

Wednesday, August 28, 2002

The extraordinary group **Tokounou All Ability African Dance** was selected by the Center for Traditional Music & Dance to represent them at Chase Plaza. Tokounou was founded in 1999 by Sidiki Condé, a dancer, drummer and singer from Guinea, West Africa. The Company members have been drawn from premiere ensembles including Les Ballets Africains and Les Merveilles d’Afrique. Condé who, despite losing the use of his legs as age 14, pursued his love of dance by breaking down barriers of traditional dance by using his hands in place of his feet. The company’s name refers to the differing abilities of its members, ranging from full ability performers to those with special needs. Towards the end of the performance, Condé asked for volunteers to learn a piece of his repertoire and the first person to join him in front of the stage was a young woman in a wheel chair.



resents: **21st** annual downtown dance

Tokounou All Ability African Dance Chase Plaza, 2002 Photo: Richard Termine

Friday, August 30, 2002

The Chinese Folk Dance Company, member of the Downtown Dance Partners (see enclosed article from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's publication *Lowdown*), is the widely acclaimed resident company of the New York Chinese Cultural Center, and is based in Lower Manhattan. The CFDC's colorful dances with flashing swords, fluttering fans and soaring silk banners, took audiences on exciting journeys from the open prairies of Mongolia to the farming villages in the Yellow River delta to the Imperial Palace of ancient China.



Chinese Folk Dance Company, Chase Plaza, 2002 Photo: Richard Termine

This year's festival not only proved a huge success for Battery Dance Company and participating dance companies, but also for the revitalization of public space in Lower Manhattan. Gracing the stage with movement, color, and vibrancy, the 21st Annual Downtown Dance Festival proved that Lower Manhattan is once again a site of commerce, art and culture.

Media for the 21st Annual Downtown Dance Festival

ARTICLES & REVIEWS

Hoy, Eduardo Marceles, August 23, 2002 (included prominent photo placements)

Star Ledger, Robert Johnson, August 27, 2002

The Villager, Doris Diether, August 21, 2002

Voice Choice in the Village Voice

Lowdown, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council publication

New York Post, Ashley Cross, August 24, 2002

LISTINGS

The New York Times, Sunday, August 18 and 25th

Arts & Leisure Guide

New York Press, August 21-27, 2002

TimeOut New York Dance Section, August 22-29, 2002

New York Post Weekly Calendar, August 23, 2002

Tribeca Trib, September, 2002

PHOTO PLACEMENT

Air France Magazine
NY Pocket Guide

TV

Live early morning coverage on NY1 covering Dha Fuzion performing at Battery Park and interviews with Jonathan Hollander and Medb McGearty on Friday, August 23rd.

Live early morning coverage on Good Day New York with shots of Chinese Folk Dance Company, Tokounou All Ability African Dance, Maurizio Nardi (Battery Dance Company), Lynn Kennedy (Battery Dance Company), and Roxane Butterfly (Jane Goldberg's Changing Times Tap & Friends) at Chase Plaza. Jonathan Hollander and John Imperiale, Senior Vice President of JPMorgan Chase, were interviewed.

Robin Gaffney from Crosswalks shown on Time Warner's channel 74 taped entire performances at Chase Plaza of Dha Fuzion, Jane Goldberg's Changing Time Tap & Friends, and Tokounou All Ability African Dance. She also conducted interviews with several of the performers as well as Jonathan Hollander, representatives of JPMorgan Chase and key volunteers. Airdate to be determined.

The 21st Annual Downtown Dance Festival was made possible through support from:

