

# DOWNTOWN DANCE FESTIVAL

## 2003 REPORT



Saturday, August 16, 2003  
Battery Park's Great Lawn 1:30 pm – 6:00 pm

batterydancecompany AND FRIENDS

# Battery Dance Company's 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Downtown Dance Festival

The Downtown Dance Festival, held on August 16, 2003, just days after the blackout that debilitated New York City and much of the Northeast, marked the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of a festival that brings a wide array of dance to lower Manhattan. The event featured three New York City-based modern dance companies, one local Chinese folk dance company and an international Indian touring company, in keeping with the mission of cultural and aesthetic diversity which has always guided the Downtown Dance Festival's curatorial decisions.

In prior years, the Downtown Dance Festival has maintained a week-long schedule of performances in two distinct downtown venues. Funding cuts and location issues in 2003 necessitated the scaling back of the Festival to a single day in Battery Park. Not to be discouraged by power outages or financial and logistical challenges, Battery Dance Company pressed on and the Festival was as successful as ever, attracting nearly 850 spectators to Battery Park.

## THE PROGRAM

The cultural mosaic of New York City was illustrated in the faces of audience members at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Downtown Dance Festival. Battery Park was in full bloom, trees outstretched with bows of green leaves providing shade from the warm sun on a beautiful Saturday afternoon. Not only were there crowds of people once the performance started, but there were handfuls of patrons watching us prepare for the festival early in the morning. Passersby stopped to have a look at what was to be on the stage later in the day. Once the performance started, the bleachers quickly filled up and others stood along the perimeter with bikes, strollers and other paraphernalia to watch the performances.

The Festival was broken down into three sections, a new format that proved to be highly successful. The first section was devoted to modern dance, weaving the pieces from Battery Dance Company, Amy Marshall Dance Company and Notario Dance Company into a beautiful tapestry from 1:30 - 3:30 pm.

Each company displayed their own true essence within the broad umbrella of modern dance amidst this mixed program. With sweeping lyricism in its ensemble piece *Mother Goose*, contrasting and trenchant solos by Yuko Suzuki and Sean Scantlebury, and comic pastiche in *Chit Chat*, Battery Dance Company's dancers showed their beauty and skill and Jonathan Hollander's eclectic choreography. Notario Dance Company's *Plucked* featured three dancers on arm stilts wowing the audience with their athleticism and skill. In *Askew*, one of Amy Marshall Dance Company's two ensemble pieces, the dancers charged across the stage in aggressive interplay, while in *Sentido De Mujer*, interpersonal relationships came to the fore. Marshall's solo for Angela Fleddermann blended rhythmic gymnastics with modern dance. A rich offering for the diverse public audience.

The second section was presented by the New York Chinese Cultural Center and featured works performed by the Chinese Folk Dance Company and the Children's

Ensemble. With each dance, the audience was swept away to a different region of China, experiencing the fascination and magnificence of Chinese traditional courtly dance as well as the humor and earthiness of its folk dances, highlighted by vibrant costumes, traditional music and props.

The third section featured Swapnasundari & Ensemble, Kuchipudi Dance of India, a rarity in New York. One of India's most highly acclaimed dancers, Swapnasundari and her ensemble performed the traditional Indian dance that hails from the small eponymous village in the Southern State of Andhra Pradesh (the capital of which is Hyderabad). With the dancers' elaborate costumes and jewelry, facial expressions, hand gestures and precise rhythmic footwork, Kuchipudi made an indelible impression on the Downtown Dance Festival audience.

In view of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, the diversity of dance displayed at the Downtown Dance Festival 2003 certainly reflected the principles of inclusiveness and harmony that our City is known for around the world.

#### THE SPONSORS

The Battery Conservancy, City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs, ConEdison, Crown Properties, Line & Tone, Morgan Stanley.

Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Consulate General of India for Swapnasundari & Ensemble.

#### THE PRESS

##### Articles

Downtown Express, 29 July – 4 August 2003, Volume 16, Number 9:

*Dance company brings the world to Downtown*

Star Ledger, 15 August 2003, Page 23:

*Festival to put a charge in Battery Park*

The Villager, 6-12 August 2003, Volume 73, Number 14:

*Dance Company brings the world to Downtown*

Voices of Lower Manhattan, 11 August 2003:

*Battery Dance: A Labor of Love, Downtown*

##### Listings

The New Yorker, 18 & 25 August 2003

Voices of Lower Manhattan, 11 August 2003

New York Times, 15 August 2003

Village Voice

Time Out New York

## Participating Dance Companies



Battery Dance Company



Amy Marshall Dance Company



Notario Dance Company



Student Ensemble from the  
New York Chinese Cultural Center



Swapnasundari & Ensemble,  
Kuchipudi Dance of India

all photos by Christopher Butt