

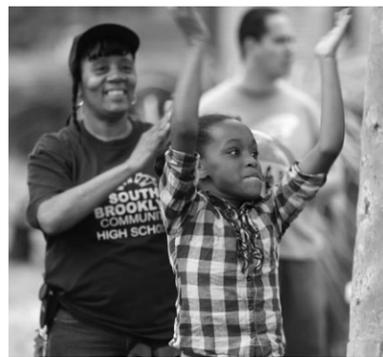


Some of the best memories from the 18th Annual Red Hook Fest took place weeks before a single artist stepped onto the Mainstage. This year's Festival featured pre-event community workshops throughout Red Hook. Many moments come to mind: seniors at the Red Hook Senior Center getting (way) down to James Brown with INSPIRIT Dance Company Founder Christal Brown; the powerful women behind Climbing PoeTree offering words of wisdom to the young change-makers at our partner organization, the Red Hook Initiative; the shrieks of excitement from the young dancers at the Beacon After-School Center when break dancing legend Rokafella finished teaching their master class and busted some moves of her own.

At the Friday Night Kick-off Event, the young

artists of DTE's In Transition Theatre Company opened the Festival with a beautiful piece of original hip-hop theatre. State Senator Velmanette Montgomery applauded the work of the teens. Climbing PoeTree, followed, performing excerpts of their multimedia spoken word piece, *Hurricane Season*, winning the packed audience members' hearts and minds with their brilliant writing and impassioned performance.

All this meant that Saturday had a lot to live up to. It didn't disappoint. World-class performances and interactive art projects brought Valentino Park and Pier in Red Hook to life all day. The festivities ended with sets from Aurora & Zon Del Barrio (heavily attended by those who had enjoyed an impromptu set at the Senior Center just weeks before) and one of



This page: (top) Staff & crew celebrate another successful Red Hook Fest; (above, clockwise from top left) Red Hook Fest dance flash mob; Zon Del Barrio on stage at the Fest; audience members enjoying the Red Hook Fest. Opposite page: East Brooklyn students at work in an audio production class; teaching Artist Violet Galagarza's hip hop dance class at East Brooklyn; members of the In Transition Theatre Company. Photos: Edwin Anglero, Gregory Jackson, and Jon Mayer.

Brooklyn's hottest new bands, Paul Josephs and MetroSonic. Dancers from Rokafella's Full Circle Soul and Christal Brown's Inspirit dance companies offered powerful performances showcasing a variety of approaches to dance making.

As always, the park was filled with partner organizations from throughout Brooklyn, lending their energy and expertise on everything from free kayak rides and family-friendly activities to advocacy initiatives on important local issues. Thousands of audience members came from neighborhoods near and far, including our Representative, Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez. Without them (without you), the Red Hook Fest could not be the community celebration that it is every year.

Dance on the Greenway

It has felt strange not to be spending our weekends in Brooklyn's historic Green-Wood Cemetery, as we have every fall for the past seven years, in preparation for performances of *Angels and Accordions*. But it is good to let our creative fields lie fallow this year, as we plant the seeds for next fall's new site-specific production, *Dance on the Greenway*. DTE will be collaborating with the Brooklyn Greenway Initiative to showcase some of NYC's most exciting dance companies and Brooklyn's new greenway, a pedestrian and bike path along the waterfront from Greenpoint to Bay Ridge.

Brooklyn Leadership

Violence continues to disproportionately impact the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. In the last year, four Brooklyn Leadership students were the victims of gun violence. It isn't fair, but it is, for now, reality. That's what makes the determination at Leadership—of students, teachers, administrators, and teaching artists—so inspiring. This community is committed to finding success no matter the obstacles.

The year-end screening of students' videos, based on their original poems, captured this spirit. One poem memorialized a brother lost to street violence. Another reflected the anxiety and excitement of being only one semester away from graduating. Still another student celebrated the birth of her child—a challenge for any high school student, but also a blessing, a reason to seek success. These insightful pieces reflected on difficulties while imagining pathways to a better future.



At DTE, young people are at the heart of everything we do. They participate in our in-school and after-school programs, they perform at and practically run our annual Red Hook Fest, and they work with artist-mentors who guide them towards academic success and futures that may include college or pursuing artistic careers.

We provided direct services to over 1,000 youth this year. Most of them came from “transfer high schools” serving overage, under-credited students with histories of chronic truancy who have chosen to give themselves a second chance at a high school diploma. The transformations we watch take place in our programs convince us that change is possible, that it doesn't depend on any one politician, that it is the responsibility of each one of us. Here are some highlights from DTE's art education programming last year:

East Brooklyn

At East Brooklyn Community High School, DTE Teaching Artists are a part of the family. Last year, you could've seen spoken word teacher Jive Poetic bringing students on stage during his open mic at the legendary Nuyorican Poets' Café in downtown Manhattan. You might've even run into hip hop dance instructor Violet Galagarza at the school's prom, where she brought her son, Noah, and got the dance floor jumping! Events like these are just plain fun, but they also have real impact. When someone is a part of the school culture as these artists are, relationships can evolve over time. Mentorships



develop, and real, life-changing growth is possible. One such story:

Tamara Downes is an exceptionally bright young woman, but she struggled at her first two high schools before enrolling at East Brooklyn. She has now been participating in DTE's spoken word programs for two years, honing her craft under Jive's guidance, both in-class and in our after-school arts internship. Tamara performed one of her pieces—*My Hair*—last spring at a school-wide “community meeting.” The poem is a mature take on issues of race, body image, and consumerism. When she got to the

ignorance blinded me

would not let me understand
the beauty in my hair

its ability to defy gravity

when poised in braids,
poised in afros

poised in freedom

—Tamara Downes

poem's most defiant line—“My hair is refusal to assimilate”—the audience lost it. Even Tamara, committed performer that she is, had to take a moment to herself to smile. Tamara is on schedule to graduate this winter, and hopes to one day attend The University of Wisconsin's First Wave, a multidisciplinary arts program.

South Brooklyn

Watching graduation ceremonies at South Brooklyn Community High School this year was like opening a scrapbook: it brought back memories of the last three years of DTE programs at the school. Whether students had participated in half a dozen DTE programs over the years (like Ricardo Matos and Jennifer Colon), or had just one or two meaningful experiences with the organization (like Madeleine Hernandez or Kadeem Melvin), “DTE students” dominated the proceedings.

We took pride, not just in the role DTE had played in their path to graduation, but in seeing on display the skills they had developed in our programs. Our students wrote eloquently about their journeys, reflected deeply on past experiences, spoke clearly, projected their voices with confidence. They looked unmistakably like what they were: young adults. And though they move on from South Brooklyn,

they are still part of the DTE family. In coming years, it is our responsibility to build the bridges that will assist them in transforming their talent and passion to sustainable livelihoods and long-term success in the arts.

In Transition Theatre Company

In Transition Theatre began as a way to address a growing problem: the lack of options presented to urban teens upon graduating high school. As it has grown into a thriving



collective of young performers, participants continue to look at these issues through their theatre work. “Why is it so hard to find work or pay for college? What resources are available to help us on these journeys?” The Company presented outstanding original pieces that grapple with these questions, in both the fall and spring, melding improvisation, playwriting, movement and rap. Just as impressive as their artistic work, though, was the way these young adults grew as individuals and as a team. As company member Jenn Colon said, “If you're not comfortable where you're at, this is where to be. We're a family at the end of the day. We show nothing but love and respect, and you can speak your mind.”

Summer Educational Theatre Project

Martha wrote about the participants in this summer's Educational Theatre Project in her opening greeting. What struck us most on the night of the performance, though (other than the mixture of joy and relief at having successfully pulled off a piece as challenging as Suzan-Lori Parks's *Venus!*), was the response from the audience. You could see transitions taking place in people's minds, as they realized that their own son/daughter/niece/friend was growing into a powerful young artist. The support of families, Red Hook residents, non-profit partners and educational allies was palpable; without it, the performance could not have happened.