



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Volume 36, No. 2
Summer 2025

Jackson Heights
Beautification Group

www.JHBG.org

Jackson Heights – “A Garden in the City”

Dance Celebrates Community!



**Help the JH community by volunteering at our cleanups and other events!
Go to JHBG.org or e-mail info@jhb.org to sign up!**

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On the cover: Art by Kirsten Magnani.

Let's dance! The figure leaping out of the background is from Nick Cave's fabulous mosaic at the Times Square station called "Each One, Every One, Equal All," a permanent piece of NYC Transit Art. The background pattern is a photo of Chihuly's piece, Neon 206 at the NY Botanical garden from 2017. The forefront dancers performed at Travers Park during the Doggie Halloween parade in 2023.

**en español
paginas 6-7**



Check out everything at Travers Park this summer! From Summer Sundays concerts, a dance performance June 7, the Public Theater's production of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* June 27, and much more!

President's Message

BY LESLIE ELLMAN

Dear Neighbors,

Even though this is a neighborhood for all seasons, summertime is one of the best times to be in Jackson Heights!

Our weekly concert series, *Summer Sundays in the Park*, brings the community together every Sunday for free live music in Travers Park. Each year we bring this series to the community and each year it gets better.

There are few joys as simple and beautiful as listening to live music outdoors, under an evening sky in the summer. This space invites appreciation and free expression from the talented musicians as well as from the audience.

Spontaneous dancing is welcomed and encouraged.



This summer issue is dedicated to dance in Jackson Heights and as you read on you will learn more about dance in the neighborhood as well as about the amazing Queensboro Dance Festival and all of the work they do to bring free dance programs to Jackson Heights and beyond.

Dance is an art form and a means of expression that is accessible to all of us, and we hope that our work brings you more opportunities to appreciate and participate in the joy and love of dance!

—Leslie Ellman, President



Editor's Message

Dance is Poetry in Motion!

BY MELISSA ZAVALA

As we face an unprecedented attempt to radically transform the arts through our cultural institutions at the national level, this issue reminds us of their vital importance in fostering community. Like no other art form, dance is a visual representation of social relations: it is part of religious rituals and celebrations while also serving as a presentation or for participation. How does dance reflect our culture at this time? This issue takes a look at our neighborhood for some insights into the current state of things through the beautiful lens of dance.

Are you familiar with dances from our neighborhood's cultural communities? Do you like Jack Whitten's abstract art? Recall that old toy store on 78th Street and Roosevelt? Find out more about these subjects and more in this issue which introduces a new writer who reminds us about a unique shop now gone. It also features our regular contributors' perspectives on the diverse issues concerning Jackson Heights, including the casino proposed for our borough's main park in Flushing Meadows.

We thank our neighbors for their continued support of our organization



and our efforts to promote the arts in their many forms. Please continue to send us story suggestions and ideas for interesting people to feature. Email us your suggestions and feedback to info@jhbg.org or write to us by mail at JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.



@jhbg-donate

Courtesy of Queensboro Dance Festival (QDF)

Summer Events in Jackson Heights

The New Queens Pride Parade

Sun. June 1, from 12 noon-6pm, down 37th Avenue from 89th Street to 75th Street. The second-oldest and second-largest pride parade in New York City is followed by a festival.

The Jackson Heights Art Club

Meets at St. Mark's Church, 3350 82nd Street, offering classes for children on Saturdays and adults on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

Annual On The Fence Outdoor Show & Sale

Saturdays June 14, 21 On display on the fence at IS 145, 34th Avenue between 79th and 80th Streets

Watercolor Painting Demonstration

Sun. June 29, 2pm St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 33-50 82nd Street.

Art Retail Therapy

For art classes and community events, visit A.R.T. at 84-26 37th Ave.

Figure Drawing (every

Monday 7-9pm) Two hours of in-person drawing from live models. All materials & skill levels welcome! \$20

Big Kids Art Club

(every Saturday, at 9am or 10:30am)

An inclusive, bilingual (ESP/ENG) time and space for kids to learn different media, create, and be encouraged to find their artistic voice. \$24

Queens Fiber Crafters Club

(one Wednesday a month, 7:30pm) Fiber artists gather to create together in a process-conductive art space. \$15

Upcoming dates: May 7, June 4, July 2, August 13

Crochet Club (biweekly on Wednesdays, 7:30pm) Beginners learn to crochet or choose a pattern to recreate with guided help. \$20
Upcoming dates: June 4, 18; July 2, 16, 30; and August 13, 27

Epicenter x A.R.T.

Gallery Series (last Thursday of the month) Join Epicenter NYC and A.R.T. every month featuring a new artist and walls of A.R.T. in your own neighborhood. Celebrate local artists and their art on view and for sale. Free attendance for all!

The Queensboro

80-02 Northern Boulevard

Father's Day, Sunday, June 15

Pre-fixe TBD

FoHi Improv

Wednesday, June 18, 7pm

Come on out to see FoHi Improv's House Team, Unisphere, perform a completely fresh, 100% improvised show on the 3rd Wednesday of every month. Based on audience suggestions, the group will weave improvised sets filled with characters and lines made up on the spot. Tickets and more info: fohiimprov.com/queensboro

Open Mic Nights

Thursdays, June 26,

July 24, August 28 at 8:30pm

Don't miss our monthly Open Mic Night featuring great local performers. Come check it out—bring your friends, participate, perform, sing, dance, do something!

JH Mile & Relay

Sat. Aug. 30, 2025. Heats run begin at 10am, rain or shine. Bib Distribution: Fri. Aug. 29 at The Queensboro, 5pm-7pm. Register at events.elitefeats.com/25qdrjackson



CELEBRATE HISTORIC JACKSON HEIGHTS
Sponsored by the Jackson Heights Beautification Group

Join the JHBG in celebrating Jackson Heights, the first planned garden and cooperative apartment community in America and a City, State, and Federal Historic District.

SATURDAY, JUNE 14
Raindate for Garden Tour: June 21 - all other events rain or shine

Lecture on the History of Jackson Heights
At 11:00am at The Renaissance Charter School, 35-59 81st Street; FREE

Exhibition of Vintage Photos and Memorabilia
From 10:00am to 2:00pm at The Renaissance Charter School, 35-59 81st Street; FREE
Laisurely view many original photographs, maps and brochures from Jackson Heights' early days

A Self-Guided Tour of Private Interior Gardens
From 12 noon to 4:00pm. These park-like private gardens, surrounded by 1920s-era garden apartments, are only open to the public once a year. Visit up to fifteen gardens at your own pace, following a map included in your ticket; Tickets can be purchased in advance or in front of The Renaissance Charter School, 35-59 81st Street, on Saturday morning; \$15

SUNDAY, JUNE 15

Escorted Walking Tours of the Historic District - Rain or shine
At 12 noon. Tickets must be purchased or reserved in advance. The tours will meet in front of the Community Church, the southwestern corner of 82nd Street and 35th Avenue; \$15

Tickets are \$15 each
Tickets may be purchased beginning June 1 at Espresso 77
For ticket information and directions leave a message at (347) 766-9129
www.jhbg.org

Owing to a Spanish language Scrabble tournament being held at the Community Church, this year the Historic Weekend's Saturday events will be held at the **Renaissance School at 35-59 81st Street**, just north of 37th Avenue. Look for the JHBG tent outside of the Renaissance School on the morning of June 14th where we will be selling tickets for the Garden and Walking Tours, books, and T-shirts. The indoor events-exhibit of photos and ephemera and lecture-will be held in a large, well-lit room, between 10am and 2pm on Saturday the 14th. See you there.

Summer Sundays in the Park lineup!

Summer Sundays in The Park

2025 is expanding! For the first time, JHBG's beloved concert series will take place at multiple venues across Jackson Heights over five months beyond the usual eight weeks in the summer. The lineup spans from jazz and funk to alt-folk and Afropop, with something for everyone.

The series kicks off on June 29, and all concerts start at 6pm:

June 29: Mark Wade Trio modern jazz (@ The Queensboro)
July 6: Jackson Heights Orchestra classical favorites (@ Travers Park)
July 13: Dan Strauss alt-folk melodies (@ Travers Park)
July 20: Eto'o Tsana & Mabina Danseuses traditional Congolese Afropop (@ Travers Park)
July 27: Joe Abba Funk Unit (with Baba Israel) instrumental R&B grooves (@ Travers Park)
August 3: Street Beat Brass Band New Orleans funk (@ Travers Park)

August 10: The Highliners (featuring Melissa Fogarty) vocal jazz (@ Travers Park)
August 17: Jennifer Wharton's Bonegasm modern twist on jazz trombone (@ Travers Park)
August 24: Zac Zinger Group fusion of Japanese tradition and contemporary jazz on the Shakuhachi flute (@ Travers Park)
September 21: Alex Owen Quartet New Orleans jazz (@ Espresso 77)
October 5: Javier Arau New Jazz Quartet contemporary jazz saxophone (@ The Queensboro)



Summer Sundays returns to Travers Park. At left, Jennifer Wharton of Bonegasm.

Jackson Heights Orchestra Takes Queens by Storm—One Neighborhood at a Time

BY CHAD TINDEL

The Jackson Heights Orchestra spent its 2024–2025 season traveling across Queens, bringing live orchestral music to new communities while several school auditoriums in Jackson Heights underwent renovations. And what a tour it was!

We were thrilled by the warm reception in each neighborhood. From the packed house at Trinity Lutheran Church in Astoria to the enthusiastic crowd at the Lexington School for the Deaf in East Elmhurst, audiences showed up to eagerly listen and connect. Sharing our music with new communities helped us grow our listener base and build relationships that we hope will continue for seasons to come.

With renovations now complete at several local schools, we're hopeful that the 2025–2026

season will continue to include performances around Queens, also including Jackson Heights. We're excited to return to our home neighborhood and to welcome both longtime supporters and new friends from across the borough.

In the meantime, don't miss our **annual Summer Pops concert at Travers Park on Sunday, July 6, 2025, at 6pm**. It's a great way to enjoy music outdoors with family, friends, and neighbors.

To watch and listen to past performances, visit jhorchestra.org or follow us on [@jhorchestra](https://www.instagram.com/jhorchestra) for updates, photos, and videos from the season.

We hope to see you this summer—and at concerts across Queens in the season ahead! ♦

The Jackson Heights Beautification Group Presents

JACKSON HEIGHTS ORCHESTRA

SUN. JULY 6, 2025
TRAVERS PARK
78-9 54th Ave

6:00 P.M.
Concert is free
\$20 suggested donation
Visit JHORCHESTRA.ORG/DONATE to make a gift to the JHO.



WENQI LI
ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Join us for a festive outdoor concert of pops classics, iconic soundtracks, and everything in between!

@JHORCHESTRA
JHORCHESTRA.ORG




Left: The JHO takes a bow at The Lexington School for the Deaf in East Elmhurst, headed by Conductor Alex Wen, and Concertmaster, Susan Metcalf (right to left from center respectively).

JACKSON HEIGHTS REMEMBERS Neighborhood residents share their memories of favorite places, people, and events.

“There Used To Be A Hobby Shop Ovah There”

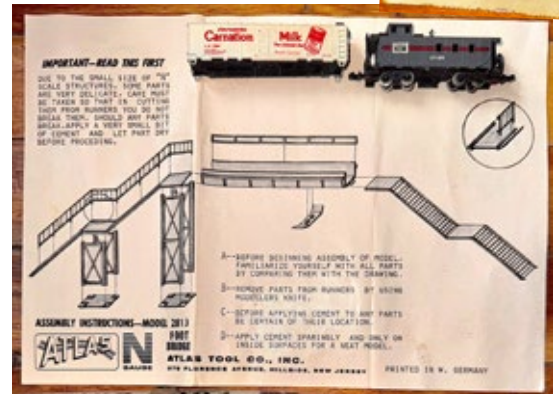
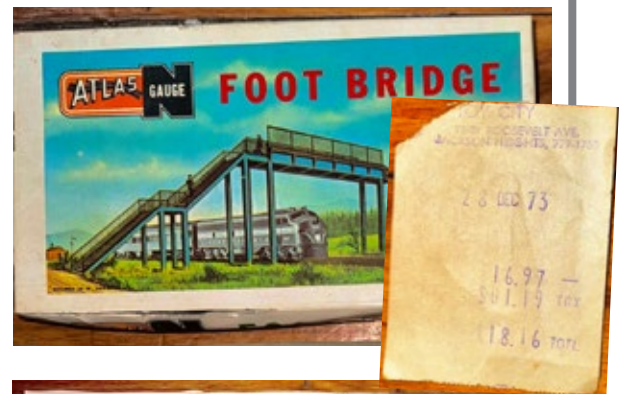
Toy City 78-01 Roosevelt Avenue, Jackson Heights, NY BY BRANDON MUÑOZ

In an old ATLAS N GAUGE Foot Bridge set lies an old receipt with a memory! Without knowing I'd be transported to a bygone shop I opened a box containing a kit of tiny parts. Model trains are so much fun to collect that they are one of the things I save. At the bottom of the box was a receipt for the kit. It is from Toy City, a former toy and hobby shop once located on Roosevelt Avenue and 78th Street. Back in the good ole days, there were hundreds of hobby shops selling trains, airplanes, action figures, toy tanks, paint kits, and little scaled village sets. These shops are now slowly disappearing around the city but there are a few still left in Queens, Brooklyn, and Manhattan.

As I opened the set, I was surprised at the contents. The bridge came in pieces as

multiple parts. In addition to it, there were train cars on the N scale. This is one of the smallest scales that model train collectors collect from a spectrum including HO, O, and G scales. G and O are bigger, HO and N are on the smaller side. This tiny bridge connected me to earlier generations of neighborhood residents who once enjoyed a hobby shop I would have patronized.

Despite trying to find images of Toy City online, there is no trace of it. Roosevelt Avenue has been home to many businesses so I wouldn't be surprised if there were multiple hobby shops there. Do you remember Toy City? For today's modelers and hobbyists, nearby Astoria has a retro hobby shop still alive and kickin' called **Rudy's Hobby Shop**, 3516 30th Avenue. It's a wonderful store selling old-school sets, model trees, villages, and art supplies. It's a real blast from the past! ♦



The corner of 78th Street and Roosevelt Avenue today.

Send us your memories! Email us at info@jhbhg.org and share your stories.

Some Summer Satisfaction: Exercise and Eat Well

BY DAVE WATSON



Ride, run, ramble or rest on 34th Avenue this summer, and enjoy some healthy movement!



We could do a lot to work out. We could go to Blink Fitness on 78th Street, off Roosevelt Avenue. I like going to the YMCA instead. You can take the Subway at either Jackson Heights station, 82nd Street or 74th Street, to 33rd Street - Rawson Street. It's not a far walk from there to 32-23 Queens Boulevard, Long Island City.

You exercise on the second floor of the YMCA where you can work your arms and legs as well as your stomach. Strengthening our muscles can make us feel tougher, and there is a swimming pool for kids and adults there too to build stamina.

If exercising makes you hungry, the **Paris Baguette** is a great place to eat, on 40-22 82nd Street, just below Roosevelt. A lot of people hang out there to eat and talk. With **Target** across the street below Roosevelt at 82nd Street, you can get food as well as clothes and other things to keep moving.

But if you want good coffee instead, **Parva Coffee** on 82-01 82nd Street and Northern, on the corner, is a great place to get food or drinks.

To work off those calories, 34th Avenue allows people to work their legs and run, stretching from 72nd Street to Junction Boulevard.

With the weather getting warm or hot—just wear your shorts. Put on some ZARA or Patagonia wear and go outside! ♦

JACKSON HEIGHTS NOTABLES

Highlighting former Jackson Heights residents of notable interest for the ways in which they represent our neighborhood.

Jack Whitten

From the Black Abstractionism Canon BY DAN KARATZAS

Until 2025, his name may not have been well known to the general public. However, with his current show—*Jack Whitten: The Messenger*—at the Museum of Modern Art, which *The New York Times*' Holland Carter called "A Peak MoMA Moment," Jack Whitten is certainly getting his due. Jack, and his second wife Mary, resided for many years in an apartment at The Chateau on 81st Street.

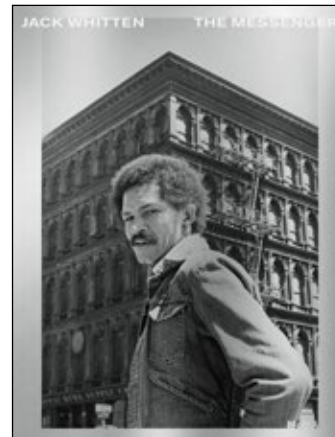
Whitten, who died in 2018, is one of the foremost African-American artists of the last half century. Born in Alabama, he enrolled at the Tuskegee Institute, planning to be a doctor. After two years there, he decided to pursue the study of art, moved to New York City in 1960, and graduated from the Cooper Union in 1964.

Jack Whitten soon became a fixture of the lower-Manhattan art scene, and over the course of the next 50-plus years, he pursued a variety of media—painting, sculpture, mosaics, and works on paper. His influences were many, ranging from the Civil Rights Movement, which he experienced firsthand in Alabama, to the island

of Crete. His 1968 marriage to Mary Staikos, a Greek American, resulted in their spending summers there. And while Whitten's art was abstract, its subjects typically had a deeper meaning, often tied to people (Martin Luther King, Ralph Ellison, Muhammad Ali, etc.) or events (September 11th, the 1964 church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, and others).

But after the events of September 11, 2001, Whitten and his wife decided it was time to leave lower Manhattan. They moved to Jackson Heights and Whitten found a studio nearby in Woodside. In an article published earlier this year in *The New York Times*, Whitten's family has left his studio intact, just as he left it prior to his death, using it as his estate's office.

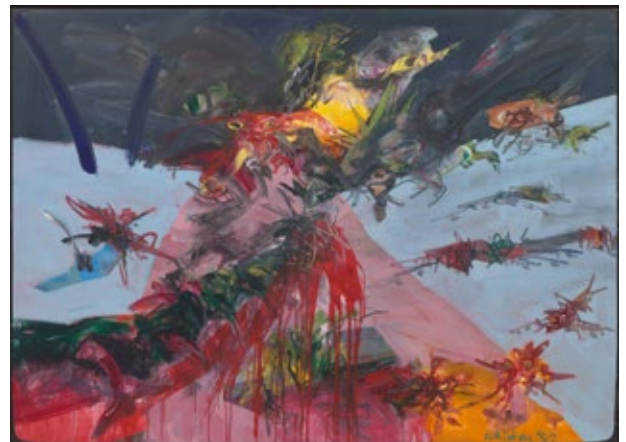
And while Whitten's work was exhibited at major museum shows over the years, the current MoMA show is his first in New York City, covering his complete oeuvre—paintings, sculptures and prints. This show closes on August 2nd, and it is only a 15-minute subway trip from Jackson Heights. Don't miss it. ♦



Cover of Jack Whitten: *The Messenger*, published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2025.



Whitten lived in The Chateau, a complex known for its beautiful French Renaissance style and its famous residents.



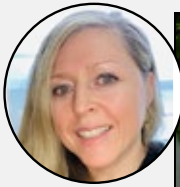
Jack Whitten. *NY Battle Ground*. 1967. Oil on canvas, 60 x 83 7/8". The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase and gift of Sandra and Tony Tamer, Agnes Gund, Marlene Hess and James D. Zirin, and Pamela J. Joyner and Alfred J. Giuffrida. © 2025 The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Photo by Jonathan Muzikar.

EN ESPAÑOL

Mensaje de la presidenta

POR LESLIE ELLMAN

El verano es una de las mejores épocas del año en Jackson Heights. Este número del boletín está dedicado al baile en nuestro vecindario: desde la serie de conciertos "Domingos de verano en el parque" hasta el Festival Queensboro de Danza, el baile es una forma de expresión accesible para todos. Esperamos que nuestro trabajo y dedicación brinden más oportunidades a los residentes de Jackson Heights para apreciar la alegría de la música y el baile y participar de ella.



Nota de la editora: La danza es poesía en movimiento

POR MELISSA ZAVALA

En una época en que enfrentamos un intento sin precedentes de transformar radicalmente las manifestaciones artísticas en las instituciones culturales de todo el país, este número nos recuerda su vital importancia en una comunidad. En particular, la danza es una representación visual de las relaciones sociales; por eso, en esta ocasión daremos un vistazo a nuestro vecindario a través de la danza. Agradecemos a todos su apoyo y los invitamos a seguir participando con sus sugerencias, historias e ideas sobre personajes relevantes en nuestra comunidad. Pueden enviarnos un email a info@jhb.org o una carta a la dirección postal JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.

Los notables de Jackson Heights

Jack Whitten: Desde el canon del abstraccionismo negro

POR DAN KARATZAS



Otro de los beneficios del verano son las obras al aire libre. El teatro The Public estará presentando "Much Ado About Nothing" en Travers Park el 27 de junio.

Nacido en Alabama, Jack Whitten es uno de los artistas afroamericanos más importantes del último medio siglo. Se mudó a la ciudad de Nueva York en 1960 para estudiar arte en Cooper Union, y tras graduarse en 1964, pronto formó parte de la escena artística del bajo Manhattan. Después de los acontecimientos de 11 de septiembre de 2001, él y Mary, su segunda esposa, se mudaron a Jackson Heights, donde residieron en el Chateau en la calle 81 por muchos años. Aunque su trabajo se ha mostrado en museos importantes, la exposición en curso, "Jack Whitten: The Messenger", en el MoMA es su primera en la ciudad de Nueva York y abarca su obra completa: pinturas, esculturas y grabados. Termina el 2 de agosto. ¡No te la pierdas!

Danza y cultura en Jackson Heights

POR MELANIA LOEWY

En vecindarios multiculturales como Jackson Heights, la danza juega un papel importante en la creación de comunidad,

así como en la preservación de la cultura y la identidad. La diversidad de Jackson Heights fomenta el intercambio cultural a través de la danza como lo muestran las distintas escuelas dedicadas en este arte.

La Escuela de Danza y Música FolkColombia

(81-10 35th Avenue) ofrece clases de danza y música colombianas (¡gratis!).

Seven Zumba

(80-83 Roosevelt Avenue) imparte clases de salsa. Los bailes clásicos de la India,

como Kathak y Kuchipudi, de

The Neela Dance Academy

(37-23 76th Street),

complementan los ritmos latinos;

mientras que **Dance Dynamics**

(84-14 Northern Boulevard)

enseña danzas escénicas como

tap, ballet y jazz.

En medio de todo, sí, habrá apuestas en el Metropolitan Park

POR LEN MANIACE

Para un proyecto que depende de su casino, los desarrolladores del Metropolitan Park, se

han vuelto, de repente, muy

discretos sobre su actividad

principal: las apuestas.

Su torrente promocional

no muestra máquinas

tragamonedas ni mesas de

juego, sino imágenes de edificios resplandecientes y un hermoso espacio verde. El sitio web del proyecto proclama: "Nuestra visión: hacer de un estacionamiento un parque". En realidad, no hay mucho de parque: solo 25 acres en una superficie de 75 acres. Afortunadamente, sí existe la visión de un parque para este sitio. Se trata de una propuesta de la coalición FED-UP para 73 acres, llamada Phoenix Meadows. Porque lo que Queens necesita es un parque de verdad.

Jackson Heights recuerda. Los residentes comparten recuerdos de sus lugares, personas o eventos favoritos "Por allá había una juguetería": Toy City, 78-01 Roosevelt Avenue

POR BRANDON MUÑOZ

En un viejo puente peatonal Atlas Escala N hay un recibo que guarda un recuerdo. Sin saber que me transportaría a otros tiempos, abrí la caja que contenía pequeñas piezas de un puente y vagones de un tren a escala N. Este pequeño puente me conectó con generaciones pasadas de

residentes que llegaron a disfrutar de una tienda de juguetes. Al fondo de la caja había un recibo de Toy City, una juguetería que alguna vez estuvo en Roosevelt Avenue y la calle 78. Por aquellos días había cientos de jugueterías que vendían este tipo de sets, ahora coleccionables. Para quien esté interesado, cerca de Astoria (3516 39th Ave) todavía existe una de estas joyas donde podrás encontrar juguetes de la vieja escuela. Envíanos tus recuerdos a info@jhb.org

JH-SCRAPS sigue recolectando los desechos de comida del vecindario

POR LENNY OLSON
El primero de abril de 2025, el Departamento de Salubridad comenzó la aplicación de reglas para compostar. El incumplimiento de la separación de material compostable de la basura general recibirá una multa de \$50 para residencias de 1 a 8 unidades y \$100 para edificios de nueve o más unidades. Sin embargo, los residentes que deseen ver los desechos de su comida beneficiar a la comunidad, pueden seguir depositándolos en JH-SCRAPS, ubicado en la calle 69 al sur del la Avenida 35, los sábados de 11am a 1pm.

La Orquesta de Jackson Heights toma Queens por asalto

POR CHAD TINDEL
La Orquesta de Jackson Heights pasó su temporada 2024-2025 viajando por todo Queens para llevar su música en vivo a nuevas comunidades mientras los auditorios de varias escuelas en Jackson

Heights se encontraban en renovación. Desde la iglesia luterana Trinity en Astoria hasta la escuela para sordos Lexington en East Elmhurst, la audiencia llenó los espacios y mostró su entusiasmo. Esperamos que la temporada 2025-2026 continúe con el mismo éxito. Mientras tanto, no te pierdas el concierto anual de verano de música pop en Travers Park el domingo 6 de julio a las 6:00 p. m. Para mirar y escuchar eventos pasados, visita jhorchestra.org o síguenos en Instagram [@jhorchestra](https://www.instagram.com/jhorchestra) si buscas fotos, videos y anuncios.

Práctica de verano: Ensayos de baile que alegran

POR ZAIN SHEIKH Y KELLY ARMENDARIZ
Así como la caléndula y la henna roja son símbolos de una boda Desi, los bailes funcionan también como piezas centrales de cualquier boda. Aunque la temporada de bodas es, por lo general, en

los meses con temperaturas moderadas, los preparativos se extienden con frecuencia hasta el verano. Primas y primos, tías y tíos, y amigos de los novios crean a una lista piezas musicales y esbozan una coreografía en anticipación a su entrada en la pista de baile. Los vínculos que se crean a través de generaciones son el corazón de esta práctica. Si pasas por Travers Park en una tarde cálida, puede que veas a un pequeño círculo de primos contando pasos, repasando el coro y riéndose alegres. En este enlace podrás escuchar una muestra de esta música nupcial:

bit.ly/44Lqiyc

El poder de la danza: Encontrar comunidad y cultura mediante la danza

POR MELISSA ZAVALA
En Jackson Heights, las escuelas de danza ofrecen clases para niños, mientras que los bares y clubes invitan a los adultos a entrar en la pista

de baile, y los espectáculos al aire libre muestran talentos de todo el mundo. Una organización en particular ha promovido el amor por la danza en Jackson Heights y en todo Queens: **el Festival de Danza Queensboro**. Fundado en 2014 por Karesia Batan, el Festival ha ofrecido a los bailarines no solo recursos, sino también comunidad. Batan fundó esta organización al darse cuenta de que los recursos, la comunidad y las oportunidades para la danza difícilmente se encontraban en Queens.

El Festival tiene lugar cada verano en parques públicos, plazas, calles y recintos como la MoMA PS1 y el Teatro de Queens, y ofrece clases en el Socrates Sculpture Park, Travers Park y Diversity Plaza. Esta vez regresa con más de 30 eventos gratis desde el 7 de junio hasta el 13 de septiembre. Puedes ver el programa completo en queensborodancefestival.org. ♦



Los bailarines de Queensboro Dance Festival divierten a las audiencias en la avenida 34 a donde regresarán este verano!

Cortesía de QDF, Robin Michals.

The Power of

Dance

Finding Community and Culture Through Movement

BY MELISSA ZAVALA



Dancers from around the world meet here in Queens, highlighting diverse cultures and promoting community.



The refrain *dance like nobody's watching* encourages embracing life with abandonment. The undeniable joy of dance makes it the perfect form for conveying this message, maybe because its kinetic energy projects pleasure without reserve. Infants sway to music sometimes before they can walk, and many children dance for joy without being taught to do so. Jumping and spinning induce happiness and are also expressions of bliss. And yet, the love of dance is lost to many in adulthood. But appreciation for dance can be reclaimed and fostered over a lifetime. In Jackson Heights, dance schools offer classes for children, while bars and nightclubs provide lively dance floors for adults, and open-air performances showcase talent from around the world. One organization in particular has been promoting a love for dance in Jackson Heights and throughout the borough: the Queensboro Dance Festival.

Founded in 2014 by Karesia Batan, the Queensboro Dance Festival has been providing dancers not just with

much-needed resources but with community as well. Its founder is a dancer living in Sunnyside, and she began her organization in response to discovering that the dance resources, community, and opportunities she was researching were mainly available outside of Queens. This prompted her to create an organization to strengthen the arts in our borough. Karesia explains: "*Where can we further our careers as dancers in Queens?* This question really started my passion to start finding other dancers and other dance resources here in Queens, to bring all of these different aspects of a dance

community here, to bring resources closer to dancers living here, and to keep us all connected. We are now in our 12th season."

A lifelong dancer, Karesia cannot remember a time when she wasn't dancing. Like her family, she has a strong foundation in martial arts. Japanese Aikido and dance kept her in motion through high school, with dance once again becoming her main focus after college following her completion of a degree in public relations. Knowing she was not physically built for office work where she would be confined for hours without moving, Karesia returned to dance, now combining her diverse training to enhance the dance world in our borough.

With now over a decade of accessing funding to support a variety of artistic projects, and successes forming partnerships with artists, funders, and other organizations, as well as building audiences and promoting a love for dance, she plans to keep expanding.

She says: "We always want to meet more Queens dancers and reach a larger audience. I think in terms of the bigger picture we exist because we want to be a platform for more visibility for Queens artists. The more we can be visible as a collective of Queens dancers, the more we can demonstrate and advocate for more arts funding coming into Queens. We want to





continue to demonstrate the active and vibrant community here, one that is underfunded—the arts are in general, but especially in Queens. Queens needs its fair share of the pie considering our size and the depth of our arts world.”

The Queensboro Dance Festival performs every summer in public parks, plazas, streets, and venues, including MoMA PS1 and Queens Theatre, offering dance classes at Socrates Sculpture Park and elsewhere, as well as Jackson Heights’ own Travers Park, 34th Avenue, and Diversity Plaza. Given the happiness sparked by dance, it’s easy to promote the organization’s mission: to strengthen the dance community here and inspire a greater appreciation for Queens dance. Karesia puts it this way:

“When there’s so much going on and emotions are running high, sometimes the best way to process emotions so complex that they can’t be put into words is to move our bodies and connect with others through

movement. This can be the only way to help us feel better. People don’t have to be trained to dance to enjoy a sense of togetherness, celebration, and understanding of one another. Besides the benefits of mental health, physical benefits, wellness, and being outdoors, being able to connect outdoors as neighbors is vital. We really believe in community togetherness, one neighborhood at a time.”

The next time stress takes hold perhaps dancing can bring much needed relief. Put on your favorite tunes and dance alone or with a partner and you’ll experience the magic of dance.

Much like other art forms, dance can be transformative. It can render powerful expressions, spark critical discussions, and foster solidarity in truly revolutionary ways. With arts institutions in dire need of financial public support, how can citizens enhance collective investment in them? The arts are more than recreational and deserve our joint commitment. Improving conditions for so many, including artists, is imperative, now more than before. Inspiring action while rallying support, the arts can help us articulate who we are. With Jackson Heights being a model of diversity, organizations highlighting the beauty of immigrant cultures and their indelible impacts on our shared culture can inspire hope for a better tomorrow. ♦

Queensboro Dance Festival

2025 Dance Companies & Schedule (subject to change)

Complete details at queensborodancefestival.org

Ah-Molla
Dance Collective

Aishwarya Madhav

Cole Collective

Cucala Dance
Company

Drye/Marinaro
Dance Company

Flamenco Latino

Gotham
Dance Theater

Shuqi Cong

Jatary Sunchy
Danza y
Proyección
Escénica

Kinding Sindaw

Kofago Dance
Ensemble

Mala's School of
Odissi Dance

Manhatitlan

NK&D / a
movement
company

San Simon Sucre
New York

Saylit Dance
Collective

Sheep Meadow
Dance Theatre

Silvana Brizuela
Weigel

The Kingdom
Dance Co

Umami Playground
Dance Inc.

VERBAL ANIMAL

Fri. June 6*: Preseason

Kickoff Silent Disco at

Culture Lab LIC, 6-9pm

Sat. June 7 (raindate

June 8): **Tour Opening**

Performances and

Classes, 34th Ave.

(93rd-94th, 89-90th), and

Travers Park, Jackson

Heights, 3-7pm

Sat. June 14:

Performance at

Evergreen Park

Ridgewood, 5pm

Sun. June 22: Class

Xchange 1 at Modega

Dance Studio, LIC,

12:30-3:30pm

Sat. June 28: Plaza

Party, Family Day at PS1

MoMA, LIC, 1:30pm

Sun. June 29:

Performance at Beach

94th, Rockaway, 5pm

Sat. July 5: Performance

at Beach 17th, Far

Rockaway, 6pm

Sun. July 6:

Plaza Party Murray

Playground, LIC, 4-6pm

Sat. July 12:

Performance

Windmiller Park,

Woodside, 6pm

Sun. July 13:

Class Xchange 2 at

Modega, 12:30-3:30pm

Sun. July 13:

Plaza Party 71st Ave

Plaza, Ridgewood, 2pm

Sat. July 19:

Performance at Roy

Wilkins Park, St. Albans,

5pm

Sun. July 20:

Performance at Bayside

Historical Society Castle

at Fort Totten (indoors),

Bayside, 3pm

Sat. July 26:

Performance at Gantry

Plaza State Park, LIC, 6pm

Sat. Aug. 2:

Class Xchange 3 at

Modega, 3-6pm

Fri. Aug. 8:

Plaza Party Lowery

Plaza, Sunnyside, 6pm

Sat. Aug. 9: Classes

+ Show Socrates

Sculpture Park LIC, 5pm

Sun. Aug. 10:

Performance at

Unisphere, Flushing

Meadows-Corona Park,

6pm

Thurs. Aug. 7:

Performance +

Live Music at

Forest Park Bandshell,

Woodhaven, 7pm

Sat. Aug. 16:

Performance at

Hunter's Point South

Park, 6:30pm

Sun. Aug. 17:

Performance +

Live Music at Corona

Plaza, Corona, 4pm

Tues. Aug. 19:

Performance at Athens

Square, Astoria, 6pm

Sat. Aug. 23:

Performance at

Queensbridge Park with

Jacob Riis Settlement,

LIC, 5pm

Sun. Aug. 24:

Performance at

Diversity Plaza, Jackson

Heights, 6pm

Tues. Sept. 9: Dancing

with the Queens Stars

Gala at Queens Theatre,

6-9pm*

Sat. Sept. 13 Season

Grand Finale at Queens

Theatre (extended

special lineup of events

and activities)

***Ticketed events**

Summer Dance Practice: Rehearsal for Joy

BY ZAIN SHEIKH & KELLY ARMENDARIZ

Whether the famously elaborate Bollywood musical numbers came first, or the family wedding dances they so splendidly depict, is a question most children of South Asian culture could share a tale or two about. As much as yellow marigolds and red henna are iconic symbols of a Desi wedding, so too are the dances that serve as centerpieces of any wedding season. But those glorious, seemingly impromptu performances are actually the result of sometimes months of tireless preparation.

Dance practice is the term describing the rehearsals for these heavily planned performances. Though the wedding season is typically in the milder months, preparations often go into high gear in the summer. Cousins, aunts, uncles, and friends of the bride and groom start creating playlists and plotting choreographic schemes in anticipation of battling it out on the dance floor. The bonds created across generations—and among family and friends who might not otherwise cross paths—are at the heart of what dance practice is. Dancing together,



and even making fools of themselves, becomes a shared joy.

To showcase the final product, many families dedicate entire evenings—often referred to as the

sangeet (meaning sung together or concert)—to music and the highly hyped dance routines, leading up to the final wedding nights.

And if you pass by Travers Park on a warm evening, you might spot a small circle of cousins counting steps, rewinding the chorus, breaking into laughter. The dance is still rough, but the feeling is already just right.

Anyone from the Desi world can likely point out a collection of songs they'll always associate with a wedding or a dance practice. Check out this playlist for a peek into some nuptial numbers! bit.ly/44LqiyC ♦

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Dance & Culture in Jackson Heights

BY MELANIA LOEWY

In multicultural neighborhoods like Jackson Heights, dance plays an important role in preserving culture, identity, and for creating community. Dance allows people to showcase their roots and find a sense of belonging.

FolkCOLOMBIA Escuela de Danza y Música, 81-10 35th Avenue, provides lessons in Colombian music and dance (for free!) for youth and families in Jackson Heights. Included in these lessons are Carranga, El Chotis and other styles. Learning these dances and music is not only a way for people to learn different rhythms and movements but also to further explore their heritage.

Another Jackson Heights highlight from its rich Latin heritage is salsa dancing. Typically done with a partner, salsa dancing involves a lot of footwork and hip movements. **Seven Zumba**, 80-83 Roosevelt Avenue, provides dance classes in salsa for those looking to sharpen their skills!

Additionally, classic Indian dances like Kathak and Kuchipudi complement Latin styles. Kathak has rhythmic footwork and pirouettes, while Kuchipudi has rich historical roots. This can be studied at **The Neela Dance Academy**, 37-23 76th Street, taught by the experienced Dr. Neela Zareen.

Lastly, **Dance Dynamics**, 84-14 Northern Boulevard, teaches performing arts dances such as tap, ballet, and jazz. Having these different styles taught in a diverse neighborhood like Jackson Heights allows intercultural exchange to be fostered through dance. People can learn dances relating to their own cultures and traditions alongside other styles, experiencing cultures through art.



Whether dancing in the streets (top) or at dance school recitals (below), dance is enjoyable for spectators and presenters alike.



: Neela Dance Academy

These Energy Efficiency Tips Can Help Save Money on Your Bill

Taking these small actions can help you save energy and money this summer:



KEEPING YOUR COOL

- On breezy days or when the temperature is below 70 degrees, open your windows instead of running your AC.
- A dehumidifier will help you feel cooler without cranking up the AC.
- Keep your AC setting no cooler than 78 degrees.
- Inspect and clean your air conditioner or cooling system every year.
- Don't heat or air condition empty rooms. A zoning system lets you control temperatures in specific areas.
- Using a ceiling fan lets you run your AC at a higher temperature and still feel cool.



- Close shades, curtains, or blinds to keep out the sun. About 40% of unwanted heat comes in through windows.
- Make sure your air conditioner is the right size for your space. A bigger unit won't keep you any cooler and costs more to run.

SMALL STUFF

- Unplug cell phones, tablets, and laptop chargers when they aren't being used. Also unplug similar devices like digital cameras, chargeable toys, or electric scooters.
- Set your computer to "sleep" and turn off the monitor if you plan to leave for more than 20 minutes (screensavers use electricity).
- Use smart strips to automatically shut down TVs, cable boxes, modems, computers, monitors, and other electronics when not in use.

POWER-HUNGRY APPLIANCES

- Use the energy-saving setting on your refrigerator, AC, clothes washer, dryer, and dishwasher.

- Let dishes air dry instead of using the dishwasher's dry mode.
- Run your dishwasher and clothes washer only when they are full.
- Don't over dry clothes: It wastes energy and damages fabrics.
- Wash clothes in cold water. About 90% of the energy required to run the washer is used to heat water. Cold water will get clothes just as clean and will prevent shrinkage and fading.
- Clean the lint filter in the clothes dryer before each load.
- Take advantage of captured heat by drying consecutive loads of clothes.

For more energy-saving tips and tools, visit Coned.com ♦

Pexels/Anna Pou

Amid Everything, Yes, There Would Be Gambling at Metropolitan Park BY LEN MANIACE

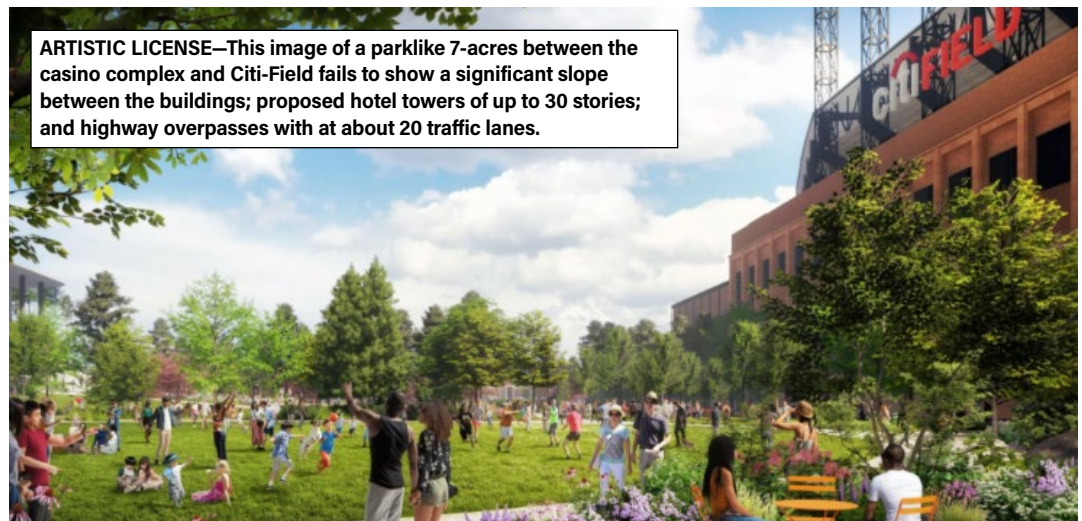
For a project dependent on its casino, developers of the proposed Metropolitan Park get suddenly shy about its essential activity—gambling. Their torrent of promotional material doesn't show slot machines, table games, or other ways to separate casino goers from their money.

Instead, we get images of glassy buildings and beautiful green space. One makes a 7-acre area proposed between Citi Field and Metropolitan Park look like Central Park transplanted to Queens, with families cavorting on a spacious lawn, which actually would be a slope. Another shows a food court with branches of local restaurants. The project's website proclaims, "Our vision; turning a parking lot into a park."

One could flash back to the movie *Casablanca*, when a French police captain decides it's time to enforce the law. "I'm shocked, shocked, to find that gambling is going on in here."

Hedge-fund billionaire and Mets owner Steve Cohen's focus on sizzle and not steak—in this case, the casino—comes perhaps because the industry's business model requires the public to lose far more money than it wins.

Metropolitan Park's closest potential customers would come from the modest-income, largely immigrant



ARTISTIC LICENSE—This image of a parklike 7-acres between the casino complex and Citi-Field fails to show a significant slope between the buildings; proposed hotel towers of up to 30 stories; and highway overpasses with at about 20 traffic lanes.



The Cohen team emphasizes the site's current status as a parking lot to make expansive promises, but it is parkland that the public would lose with this plan.

neighborhoods of Flushing, Corona, and East Elmhurst, designated by the state as "disadvantaged areas." Sen. John Liu rang the alarm in a *Daily News* opinion piece in March 2024. "There can be no doubt that the arrival of new casinos in New York City will lead to increased rates of gambling addiction, financial

hardship and strained familial relationships for Asian-American New Yorkers."

Yet this spring, Liu introduced a bill stripping the area's parkland protection, a requirement to build the casino complex. In doing so, Liu defied the legislative custom of deferring to the senator of an area affected by a bill. That senator, Jessica Ramos,

refused to introduce the bill. The legislation was still pending when this was edited.

There is not a lot of "park" in this project: 25 acres scattered across a roughly 75-acre site. Queens desperately needs more parkland; we rank last, with only seven percent of the borough in city parks, compared to 14 percent for the entire city. Fortunately, a real park vision exists for the site, a 73-acre proposal from the grassroots FED-UP coalition, called *Phoenix Meadows*, after the mythical creature that rises from the ashes. (The site was once an ash dump.)

A genuine park is what Queens' 2.3 million residents need, not a drawing with scattered, leftover spaces colored green that developers cynically call a park. ♦

JH-SCRAPS Continues to Take in Community Food Scraps BY LENNY OLSSON

After a winter break, curbside composting in Queens started year-round collection in March 2023. On April 1, 2025, the Department of Sanitation began enforcement of composting rules. Failure to separate compostable items from general trash will lead to fines beginning at \$50 for residences of 1-8 units and \$100 for buildings of nine or more units.

However, if residents would like to see their food scraps directly benefit the Jackson Heights neighborhood, they can continue coming to JH-SCRAPS, located under the CSX train tracks on 69th Street just south of 35th Avenue every Saturday between 11am and 1pm all year long. The site is closed on Christmas Day and during extreme weather events, such as

hurricanes, thunderstorms and blizzards. We accept most items with the exception of dairy, grease, fat, and meat, poultry, and fish.

The compost generated by residents is used for neighborhood beautification projects, like JHBG's Tree LC program and the Veggie Nuggets' garden. For those looking to spruce up street trees on their block, come by and take some

bags for free. Unfortunately, without the volunteer power available, we cannot deliver bags; someone will have to pick them up from the site during collection hours. We ask that the empty bags be returned so they can be reused. ♦





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VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS – Summer 2025

ONGOING EVENTS

Saturdays, 11am-1 pm

JH-SCRAPS (composting)

69th St. & 35th Ave.

For info on what is compostable,
contact info@JHBG.org

Most Saturdays, 10 am

Tree LC Meets at the NE corner of
80th St. & 37th Ave.

Schedule may vary and include some
Sundays. Check the

[JHBG Facebook page](#)

for complete information.

Saturdays 10 am

Clean and Green

For complete details,
go to info@JHBG.org.

Saturdays 10:30 am

Meet at the gardens at St. Mark's
Episcopal Church on 34th Ave.,
between 81st and 82nd Streets.

Daily

JH-CREW dog run

69th St. between 34th & 35th Aves.

To join, go to info@JHBG.org
for application. Suggested donation,
\$25/year.

FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS:

Please join us or renew your membership (there are 2 ways):

Go to www.JHBG.org/membership

and pay by credit card. It's quick and easy!

Mail a check with this form for the membership level you select to:

JHBG-Membership • P.O. Box 720253

Jackson Heights, NY 11372

Membership includes a subscription to *Views from the Heights* and helps fund our numerous
community activities. JHBG is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, so your contribution is tax deductible.

Please check membership level:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Please print the following:

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Address (Include apt. #): _____

City/State/Zip: _____

E-mail address: _____

If you're interested in being contacted about any JHBG activities, please email
info@JHBG.org.