Theater Company Brings Shakespeare to Queens Parks

By Katie Honan on July 17, 2013

QUEENS — All the world's a stage, but Queens is where you can see Shakespeare, as local theater group Hip to Hip Theater Company will bring two of the Bard's plays to parks across the borough.

Jason Marr and his wife, Joy, started the theater company seven years ago with a show in a park and church courtyard near their home in Sunnyside.

Their plan to put bring Shakespeare's plays to the borough has grown each year, and they now perform at 10 parks in Queens.

The shows kick off on Wednesday, July 24 with a performance of "The Tempest" near the Unisphere at Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. They close out the Queens shows on Aug. 18 with a performance of "Love's Labor's Lost" at the Socrates Sculpture Park.
There will also be an educational component for kids a half-hour before the shows start.
"Our mission is to serve underserved communities, that's always been the guiding principal," he said.

When deciding where to perform, Marr said he looks to the communities that don't have as much access to theater. "Not everyone has the luxury of going into Central Park and waiting all day to get tickets for the Shakespeare offering there," he said.

Queens is known for its diverse population, and its parks and venues share that variety.
Marr says he loves Gantry State Plaza and Socrates Sculpture Park on the East River, with sweeping views of the Manhattan skyline; and O'Donohue Park in Far Rockaway, with an amphitheater that overlooks the Atlantic Ocean. He also loves performing in Bayside, where the crowd is always particularly receptive, he said.

In order to keep the shows free in Queens, Hip to Hip Theater plays a fundraiser show in August in Southampton. The company has also receives financial support from Queens Council of the Arts and from Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer's office.

"Public funding is there and growing for us," he said. "The idea has always been to become the public theater of Queens."