

2011 REPORT FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The summer of 2011 marked Hip to Hip Theatre Company's fifth season of "Free Shakespeare in the Park." We produced two full Shakespeare plays (*Much Ado About Nothing* and *Othello*) and toured them to eight diverse parks in Queens County, including Forest Park, Fort Totten Park, Flushing Meadows, Gantry Plaza State Park, the courtyard of Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Socrates Sculpture Park, Sunnyside Gardens Park, the courtyard of the Voelker Orth Museum, and concluded with gala performances in Southampton's picturesque Agawam Park. We literally took our plays from one end of the island to the other!

48-25 43rd Street, 3F
Woodside, NY 11377

Phone/Fax: 718-729-8567
Email: contact@hiptohip.org

www.hiptohip.org

Artistic Director

Jason Marr

Both shows were fully produced with period costumes, sets, lights and properties; they featured a professional company of actors; they were geared to appeal to lovers of Shakespeare and to those experiencing Shakespeare for the first time; and, in the proud tradition of Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival, both productions were family-friendly, free and open to the public.



Did our programming further our Mission? Absolutely. By offering free theatre in a public arena, Hip to Hip reached a large and multicultural audience, many of whom may not have otherwise had access to cultural entertainment. This satisfies the heart of our mission, which is to stimulate and develop interest in the theatre arts, and to enrich the life of the community. On opening night, the office of Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer, the chair of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, affirmed our mission by cutting the ribbon to our summer season.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS AND MEASUREMENT

Board of Directors

Daren Kelly
Jason Marr
Joy Marr
Katie Dugdale O'Sullivan



The best gauge of Hip to Hip's work is the audiences' response, and it is with great pride that I report that the 2011 audiences were some of our most enthusiastic.

In addition to this instant feedback, Hip to Hip attempts to measure the success of its programming by (1) the quality of the performances; (2) the size, diversity and enthusiasm of the audiences; and (3) the amount of positive exposure the performances receive in the community.

QUALITY OF PRODUCTIONS

As in each prior season, the 2011 ensemble consisted of professional actors appearing under the auspices of Actors' Equity Association, the performing arts union. All of the actors are well-versed in Shakespeare, and are highly credentialed performers having worked extensively on stage, television and film.

Hip to Hip also remains committed to high production values (i.e. sets, costumes, lights and props). Though by necessity we have to travel light, our goal remains to give the audience as much of a "theatre experience" as possible. A few of the production values that were offered in our fifth season include:

- A traditional Shakespearean set including a frons scenae (stage wall) which separates the playing area from the tiring house (backstage area)
- Costumes designed by Nancy Nichols, our resident Costume Designer
- Professional grade stage swords for the sword fights
- Live music to accompany the songs and dances
- Professional grade stage lighting to enhance visual clarity as night falls



SIZE, DIVERSITY and ENTHUSIASM OF AUDIENCES

Over the last five years Hip to Hip has built a wide multi-cultural audience. The eight Queens' parks which Hip to Hip played in 2011 covered almost every major hub in the borough. Our goal is to continue bringing together the largest cross-sections of these communities and to continue measuring an overall increase in the size of our audience each consecutive year. The below chart reflects our programming's rate of growth over the past five years:

- ❖ 2007: Two parks, attendance approximately 500.
- ❖ 2008: Three parks, attendance approximately 950.
- ❖ 2009: Five parks, attendance approximately 2,000
- ❖ 2010: Seven parks, attendance approximately 4,000.
- ❖ 2011: Nine parks, attendance approximately 4,400.

EXPOSURE

Another gauge of our programming's success is the amount of positive exposure we receive from the media/internet, and from "word-of-mouth" within the community.

I am happy to report that our fifth season of Free Shakespeare in the Park received very good coverage. We were featured in and/or received positive press from The New York Times, The Daily News, Newsday, The Queens Chronicle, The Queens Times Ledger, The Queens Tribune, Southampton Press, QueensBuzz.com, and countless internet-based periodicals and blogs. In addition, Hip to Hip was honored by WNYC's (New York City's NPR affiliate) STAR Initiative, and won financial support from Queens Council on the Arts' "Community Art Fund" for the third consecutive year. But perhaps it is the buzz within the community that gives the clearest sense of our programming's success. Consider the following letter from an audience member:

My daughter Betsy and I attended the performance yesterday at Meadow Lake. We were the ones swaddled in the pink blanket, stage left! We both agreed that it was a truly magical evening. Hip to Hip and Parks Dept. did everything just right last evening!

-Vivian Carter, Rockaway

CONCLUSION

2011 was undoubtedly an eventful year for Hip to Hip Theatre Company. We overcame a series of challenges to produce our most ambitious season yet. After being notified of a twenty percent cut in our public funding from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Council on the Arts, we undertook a spirited fundraising campaign and actually finished the year with a net surplus. Despite having to cancel four performances due to an unseasonably rainy August, we were able to add a ninth venue to our tour, and we saw a ten-percent increase in our overall attendance. We lost a lead actor to a family emergency midway through the run, but we were able to replace him without much disruption. In brief, with less than \$20,000, we took two exciting, fully-produced Shakespeare plays to the neighborhoods of 4,400 people who may not have otherwise had access to quality cultural entertainment.