



Friday, July 03, 2009

## IMAGINE: NDI'S TRIBUTE TO JOHN LENNON



About ten years ago, I found a video at the NYPL called *He Makes Me Feel Like Dancin'*. Curious, I checked it out, took it home, and was blown away by

what I saw.

The documentary followed New York City Ballet principal dancer Jacques d'Amboise, in his journey as the founder and director of NDI, a 31-year-old dance program for young people in the public schools.

Then I found *Who's Dancin' Now*, which documents what became of the young people who were some of the first to go through his program. In their 20s, they talked about the impact that dancing with Jacques and his program had had on them.

Down the road, as a coordinator for volunteers in NY's public schools, I got to watch some of NDI's staff teach young people dance moves which culminated in an end-of-the year performance.

I learned that the best of the best from each school are pulled out each Saturday to do special rehearsals at LaGuardia High School for the Performing Arts. This group is known as the Saturday S.W.A.T. Team, and this year they put on a spectacular [tribute to John Lennon](#).

The performance was held at LaGuardia and the audience was packed each time the cast performed. They depicted the life and the music of Lennon through mostly dance, with one song sung by the cast at the end. There was a special tap dance number which featured Chloris Leachman.

The energy up there on the stage was through the roof high. These young people had obviously worked hard, hard, hard over the last year to master the many dance numbers which movingly portrayed Lennon's life, music, and message of peace.

After the show was over, I talked with an NDI staff member on the phone. He told me that some of the NDI graduates are open about the fact that the program kept them off drugs and out of jail.

I strongly encourage you to track this organization, to [donate to their work](#), and to attend next year's end of the year performance.

Long live NDI!!!

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