



DYE WORKSHOP
BY OUT OF SEAM

Abrons Arts Center 2023 Impact Report



Happy Holidays!

This December, I'm so excited to close out another exciting year of arts and culture on the Lower East Side and welcome you to join us for *Sleeping Beauty*, this year's joyful and spectacular holiday Panto.

This month also marks my first full year as director of Abrons Arts Center! I am so proud to be part of such an incredible team who continues to produce dynamic, one-of-a-kind programming: a Juneteenth block party, a Lunar New year ceramics workshop, a standup show honoring the Jewish holidays, and intergenerational salsa class are just some of the many events that we have had the pleasure of producing for and enjoying with our communities.

As the Arts Center welcomes the next phase of its evolution, I'm thrilled to share that we're already witnessing the fruits of deeper community engagement. In the past year, we've celebrated a record number of full houses across all of our critically acclaimed live performance and exhibition programming. We've also provided transformational support to New York City-based artists through our residency programs, commissioning and presentation initiatives, and subsidized studio and theater rental offerings. Finally, our collaborations with Henry Street Settlement continue to fortify our values of equity and access. The NYCHA Arts Initiative offers free tuition for Abrons's arts education programming to our neighbors who live in local public housing. With the support of the Settlement's department of integration and community engagement who helps spread the word about the initiative, nearly 40% of learners in our arts education program attend tuition-free. We are committed to keeping the Arts Center doors open wider than they've ever been.

The momentum is palpable here at Abrons. If you're reading this, it's because you're part of our momentum. On behalf of the entire Abrons Arts Center family, I thank you so much for joining us. The Abrons mission – to mobilize communities through the transformative power of art – wouldn't be possible without you.

2024 will usher in more exciting changes for Abrons. We will be breaking ground on some meaningful renovation that will increase physical accessibility of the Arts Center for all. While parts of our building may be covered in scaffolding, we will remain a home for New Yorkers at all ages and stages of their creative growth. I hope you will join us this December, next year, and beyond, for a show, exhibition, workshop or rehearsal. You are welcome here!

With gratitude always,

Ali Rosa-Salas
Vice President of Visual & Performing Arts



Abrons Impact: 2023

Abrons Presents
Programming & Residencies

88 Presentations
1,249 Artists Supported
21,177 Attendees

Abrons Arts Education
At Abrons, in Schools & Beyond

857 Classes
82 Sites
1,900 Learners

Community Members
Served through Abrons & Henry
Street Settlement

78,503 People served



Abrons Presents: Programming & Residencies

In 2023, our AIRspace residencies hosted 27 New York City-based artists working in visual art, performance, and curation. Abrons supports our AIRspace residents through commissions, studio space, and professional development opportunities.

Our critically acclaimed programming season activated our 3 theater and galleries with work that explored topics ranging from grief to graffiti culture.

“ [Sad Boys In Harpy Land] is a shockingly playful look at what it’s like to try and stay alive when it feels like history is crushing you.”

— Alex Tatarsky’s *Sad Boys In Harpy Land* reviewed in The Forward

[Read](#)

“A Brooklyn artist is using his own experience with his grandmother to help others going through the challenges of having loved ones living with dementia.”

— Oye Group’s *Mercedes Healing Room* reviewed on PIX11

[Watch](#)



Abrons Arts Education: At Abrons, in Schools & Beyond

Abrons Arts Center Arts Education program supports the creative development of our community across all artistic disciplines.

Our Center Education program offers classes, workshops, and private lessons in dance, music theater, and visual art at our Grand Street facility.

- Our NYCHA Arts Initiative expands access to our Center Education programming by providing free tuition to New York City public housing residents.

Abrons brings arts education to the Lower East Side and beyond.

- Our Studio Lab program embeds teaching artists in local public schools and offers progressive arts education experiences in the performing, visual, literary, and media arts.
- Our Promoting the Arts Through Henry Street (PATHS) initiative curates dynamic arts programming for Henry Street Settlement program participants.

Abrons Community Features

Sassy Ma'at: 2023 Parent Artist AIRspace Resident

Describing her own creative work, poet Sassy Ma'at uses the language of life and death. "I consider my creative life essential to my very being. To my sanity, to my survival. Through poetry, I delve into myself." She refers to her poetry, which frequently centers on racial, sexual, and childhood traumas, as "the work I love and need to do."

But as a working parent who makes her living outside of the arts, Sassy often struggles to find the time and space she needs to engage in this vital work. Her "mother brain," as she calls it, is constantly churning with thoughts of her daughter's needs. In addition to ensuring that her nine-year-old, Isi, is fed and prepared for school, Sassy prioritizes meeting Isi's creative needs. "I was so happy for her when she found an artistic home and community at Abrons Arts Center!"

Isi attends Abrons's Summer Arts Camp and takes weekly piano lessons at Abrons during the school year. As Sassy waited to pick Isi up from class one Friday afternoon, she stared at a screen behind the welcome desk in Abrons's lobby. "It said, 'Abrons is a Community.' It was a moment of inspiration. I suddenly realized that this was not only for my daughter, but that I could be a part of this artistic community too!" Sassy immediately researched adult offerings at Abrons and applied for the Parent Artist AIRspace Residency.

In July, Sassy began a one-year residency at Abrons Arts Center. "What a blessing," she says, "to have the gift of time and space without pressure." "The residency provided funds for childcare, so Isi got to go to a sleepaway summer camp, and I had time – sacred time – to engage with my work." "I am so grateful for the push that Abrons gave me. To have an organization that believes in you is such an encouragement. I will be sending my completed poems out into the world soon, and I cannot wait to see what happens!"





Princess Lockerooo: Studio Renter

Samara Cohen knows you may never have heard of waacking. The dancer and choreographer, who performs under the name Princess Lockerooo, has been spreading the gospel of waacking – an L.A.-based club dance form from the 1970s – throughout her 20-year career. But, she says, the dance style – and the community of dancers who study, perform, and celebrate it – only recently found their New York City home.

Waacking is a defiant, expressive, and joyful reaction to the oppression faced by the queer Black and Latine communities that created the style. According to Samara, “Waacking is very interpretive. It’s a vocabulary more than a strict form, so it’s all about exploring and discovering yourself, loving and accepting yourself.”

Samara has performed and taught waacking workshops in more than 30 countries and throughout the United States, but the high cost of rehearsal space in New York City made it difficult for her to build a waacking community here, despite the city’s deep connection to the club dance scene. In the last year, since she discovered the affordable studio rental options at Abrons Arts Center, Samara says, “I have finally really built a community. Abrons has become our home.”

Now, Samara uses Abrons studios to rehearse with her company, The Fabulous Waack Dancers, and lead rigorous workshops that bring waacking to new audiences and further establish the club style’s place in the New York City dance scene. She provides full scholarships to several students, specifically those from within BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities. She also keeps tuition as low as possible and plans to offer even more scholarships, work study positions, and subsidized programs moving forward. None of this would be possible, she says, without the low-cost rental options at Abrons.

Abrons Alums in the Arts



Alexandra Tatarsky

Alexandra Tatarsky is a third-generation Lower East Sider who says her early life in Lower Manhattan – including her childhood connection with Abrons Arts Center and Henry Street Settlement – inspired her life in the arts and continues to inform her work. Alexandra's mesmerizing solo performance, *Sad Boys in Harpy Land*, which debuted at Abrons in March 2023 and was created during her time as a 2019–20 Performance AIRspace Resident, has landed off-Broadway and will be running at Playwrights Horizons from November 2 to December 10.



Eliut Ortiz

Eliut Ortiz has been a member of the Abrons Arts Center community since he began taking dance classes here as a young child in the early 2000s. Upon graduating from college, Eliut informed David Garza, Henry Street Settlement President & CEO, of his desire to pursue a career in lighting design and his struggles finding opportunities in the midst of the COVID19 pandemic. David and the team at Abrons Arts Center created an internship program for Eliut, through which he learned the skills of technical direction and lighting design, as well as what he calls “real world stuff,” like marketing his skills, negotiating contracts, managing money, and creating meaningful connections and professional relationships. Today, you can see Eliut’s lighting design and technical direction work throughout New York City in productions like The Magazine’s May 2023 run at the Sargent Theater, rotating Oye Group installations including *Tranquilo* and *Mercedes*, and an upcoming staging of *King of the Jews* at Abrons Arts Center.



Abrons at a Glance

Abrons Presents

Our programming and residencies support New York City based artists to develop and present new work that is presented in our theaters and galleries.

Arts Education

Our arts education programming supports the creative growth of youth and adults interested in dance, music, theater, and visual art.

Studio and Theater Rental Program

Our studio and theater rental program offers artists premium access to our facilities for rehearsals and presentations at affordable rates.

History and Mission

Abrons Arts Center is a home for contemporary interdisciplinary arts in Manhattan's Lower East Side. A core program of the Henry Street Settlement, Abrons believes that access to the arts is essential to a free and healthy society. Through performances, exhibitions, education programs, and residencies, Abrons mobilizes communities with the transformative power of art.

Abrons Arts Center is the arts pillar of Henry Street Settlement (HSS), a 129-year-old social service agency located in Manhattan's Lower East Side neighborhood. HSS operates 18 sites across the Lower East Side, reaching over 50,000 people annually through four program divisions: Education & Employment, Transitional & Supportive Housing, Health & Wellness, and Visual and Performing Arts.



Support Abrons

Make a donation to ensure that Abrons Arts Center remains a vibrant, community-centered space for arts and culture in New York City now and for generations to come.

To donate, visit our [website](https://www.abrons.org) or contact Amalia Manolagas (amanolagas@henrystreet.org).

Please also contact Amalia if you'd like to:

- Discuss the impact of your donation,
- Join us for a visit and tour, and/or
- Consider other ways to get involved.

We'd love to hear from you!



THANK YOU!



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