



Urban Stomp: Dreams & Defiance on the Dance Floor -
UPCOMING EXHIBITION AT MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK CELEBRATES THE
LEGACY OF SOCIAL DANCE IN NYC

Opens April 11, 2025

Press Preview: Tuesday, April 8, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

New York, NY (February 27, 2025)— **Museum of the City of New York** is thrilled to announce its upcoming exhibition, ***Urban Stomp: Dreams & Defiance on the Dance Floor***, which will celebrate over 200 years of social dance in New York City. Opening on April 11, 2025, this groundbreaking exhibition offers a dynamic journey through NYC dance floors’ role as vital spaces for connection, creativity, and joyful rebellion in the lives of New Yorkers across generations.

Urban Stomp will guide visitors through a rich history of social dances, featuring styles like foxtrot, lindy hop, salsa, hip-hop, hustle, vogue, and more—each one born, shaped, or popularized in New York. Through a captivating mix of film, fashion, ephemera, installations, photography, instruments, and digital dance tutorials, the exhibition will immerse visitors in the vibrant dance cultures that have shaped—and been shaped by—the city’s ever-changing cultural landscape.

Visitors will explore historic dance trends that became popular and controversial in their time, including waltz and tango crazes, the dance cultures that prompted New York’s notorious Cabaret Law, and voguing, which arose out of late 20th century drag balls and ballroom houses. They will also learn about the lasting influence of a range of leading figures that advanced dance cultures like ballroom dancers Vernon and Irene Castle; Celia Cruz, known as the Queen of Salsa, and Big Daddy Kane and groups like the Dynamic Rockers, who pioneered breakdancing and revolutionized social dance culture on the city’s dance floors.

The exhibition also explores globally influenced genres such as cumbia/cumbia sonidera, bhangra, Jewish/Yiddish dances, Native/Indigenous American dances, and dabke — all of which have taken on new meanings when “remixed” in present-day New York City.

Urban Stomp invites visitors to engage firsthand through earning new moves or showcasing their own style throughout the exhibition. With over 20 engaging video tutorials across the exhibition’s five sections, the experience highlights dance as an activity for both education and entertainment. The exhibition’s grand finale is a full-size dance floor where visitors can select from a variety of music and dance genres for their very own solo or group dance parties.

Derrick León Washington, PhD., Institute of Jazz Studies’ Berger–Carter–Berger Fellow and co-curator of *Urban Stomp*, says, “New York City’s dance floors have always been more than just spaces to dance—they are

cultural epicenters where innovation and tradition meet. This unprecedented exhibition celebrates the enduring spirit of inter-connected communities and their defiant joy that continues to resonate on and off the dance floor.”

The exhibition is drawn from the Museum’s collection, as well as from key loans from organizations including the Institute of Jazz Studies, CUNY Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Louis Armstrong House Museum & Archives, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, New York Public Library, Thunderbird American Indian Dancers, Celia Cruz Foundation, and the Royal House of LaBeija, among many others.

Urban Stomp is organized into five main sections, each highlighting distinct dance cultures that were born or transformed in New York City:

- **You’re Invited: Balls, Ballrooms & Bars** explores the spaces where dances such as the cotillion, waltz, polka, foxtrot, and ragtime emerged and evolved, reflecting the dynamic social interactions of the time.
- **It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)** delves into the exuberance of the swing era, focusing on the lindy hop and solo jazz dances, such as the Charleston, that symbolize a new era of social possibilities.
- **Wepa! Freedom Dreams from Mambo to Merengue** highlights how migration and immigration fueled the practice of vibrant Latin dance forms, from various styles of salsa dancing to bachata and beyond.
- **The Cypher: Breaks and Breakin** evokes the revolutionary energy of hip-hop, ball culture, and the hustle as they continue to inspire and reshape dance communities worldwide.
- **Are We All City Yet? Traditions Remixed** focuses on how New Yorkers have adapted and redefined dance traditions from around the world, creating new spaces for cultural expression and community building.
- The **"All Dancing Allowed!"** dance floor is an interactive experience where visitors choose a music genre to get the party started. Unlike New York City's cabaret law—enacted in 1926 and repealed in 2017—which limited where people could legally dance, this space welcomes everyone to move, watch, record, and build community through dance.

Sarah Henry, Chief Curator and Deputy Director of the Museum of the City of New York and co-curator of *Urban Stomp*, expresses her excitement for the exhibition: “*Urban Stomp* captures the essence of New York’s diverse communities and their histories through dance. This exhibition, which occupies most of the Museum’s third floor, illuminates how the dance floor, much like the city itself, is a place where cultures collide, and creativity thrives.”

In addition, *Urban Stomp* will host a series of public and educational programs, including live performances, workshops, and panel discussions, offering visitors the chance to engage with the exhibition’s dynamic themes.

Stephanie Hill Wilchfort, Ronay Menschel Director and President of the Museum of the City of New York, notes, “*Urban Stomp* is a celebration of the city’s indomitable spirit, captured through the lens of dance. This exhibition is not just about the history of movement; it’s about the resilience, creativity, and expressiveness that define New York City.”

The Museum thanks the social dance teachers and culture-bearers for their assistance in creating dance tutorials that will appear throughout the exhibition and dance floors.

Urban Stomp is made possible with generous support from the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Todd DeGarmo, STUDIOS Architecture, the National Endowment for the Arts, an anonymous family foundation, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the New York City Council. Support for curatorial and collections work on this exhibition is provided by the Laura and Ray Johnson Fund and by Robert A. and Elizabeth Rohn Jeffe. Additional in-kind support provided by Master & Dynamic.

Urban Stomp is presented in collaboration with the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University–Newark.

The exhibition design was led by Marissa Martonyi, with media production by Earthbound Studio.

#UrbanStompMCNY

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

The country’s first and largest city museum, the Museum of the City of New York fosters an understanding of the distinctive nature of urban life in the world’s most influential metropolis. Through history, popular culture, and art, the Museum explores New York City’s influence nationally and globally. Named the "Best Museum" in *Time Out New York's* "Best of the City 2021," MCNY holds a 750,000-object collection and hosts two permanent exhibitions, two immersive films, and four rotating exhibitions in its historic building at the top of Museum Mile.

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