

THE BLACK IRIS PROJECT

Where Black lives become works of art

ESTABLISHED 2016

BIP NIGHT AT THE

RADIO CITY
CHRISTMAS
SPECTACULAR



2019 RECAP

The Black Iris Project, in partnership with the Radio City Rockettes, hosted “Black Iris Project night at the Radio City Christmas Spectacular”; which brought 300 Bronx youth and adults together for a free performance of the spectacular, a workshop with BIP Artistic Director J. McQueen, and a Q&A with two Rockettes of color.

At 8 years old McQueen was afforded an opportunity to see the Broadway tour of Phantom of the Opera. That single experience forever changed the trajectory of his life and instilled in him a strong sense of discipline and focus. Discipline and goal-setting has been instrumental to his success as a professional and was what he stressed in his workshops with the youth. Throughout November and December McQueen led a series of PowerPoint presentations (each 1-1.5 hours in length) where here he shared stories and anecdotes from his childhood and the development of his robust career in New York City.

McQueen also used this opportunity to excite the young students about how special of an opportunity they were receiving to see a performance for free at Radio City Music Hall, where many of the youth and adults had never before stepped inside. The event was an incredible success and The Black Iris Project looks forward to future partnerships with The Rockettes.

TESTIMONIALS

Thank you again for such an incredible experience. This show has impacted my dancers in various ways as my dancers seem truly inspired by the professionalism, quality and energy of the performances. They connected and admired the work ethic that the Rockettes discussed in the Q&A session as well as the chance to even be able to talk with them. I feel that their work ethic has even increased as they are understanding that hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard.

Ms. White
Bronx Charter School for the Arts



Thank you again for inviting my students to the Radio City Christmas Spectacular! Most of the students who attended the production had never been to such a huge, extravagant theater. The moment they stepped into the theater, their mouths were wide open in astonishment. It was surely the start of an unforgettable moment for them. Once the show started, they were amazed by the orchestra, singing, dancing, lighting, and even the way the props moved across and around the stage. And as if that wasn't enough for them, they were extremely excited to be afforded the opportunity to meet two Rockettes up close and personal, and ask them questions about themselves and about the production. This experience has impacted them in such a positive way. They look forward to some of the opportunities that the Rockettes experience- whether it's in stage crew work, technological lighting, singing, dancing, or even future plans of attending other productions. It so crucial that students know that there's so much more in the world that they too can be a part of, or even create one day. Thank you so much.

Ms. Diaz
PS6X - The West Farms School

Thank you so much for your presence and being in community with our young people. It was wonderful to hear about your personal journey, artistry and work in world. It embodied all the aspects of what we want them to be exposed to. It's also important for them to see live examples of art as action, so thank you. They remembered everything you shared and one of the students was very excited to show us all steps he retained.

Ms. Green
DreamYard

TESTIMONIALS

Just want to thank you, your team and the sponsors so much for this wonderful gift. Me, my team and the students were so impressed and wowed by your powerpoint presentation. The transparency was powerful and so inspiring. One of my students remarked that your journey gave him "hope and faith that one day he would be able to work on a professional platform like Radio City Music Hall". My colleague who was in the room was really taken by your ability to hold the attention of our students, how much material you were able to put on the students, how you integrated their movement ideas into the phrase and chipped away at their "limiting" perceptions of Ballet. Our students were absolutely floored by the show. The dancers, the glitz, the glam, the live orchestra, the costumes, the revolving stage, all of it was amazing and they were really thankful for the opportunity to see the show.

Ms. Hughes
MindBuilders



My students absolutely loved the performance. The next day in the hallway, they were doing ballet kicks and spinning like ballet dancers. One boy in particular, came up to me the next day and asked me where he can possibly take a dance class. He was very inspired by the show. My students loved the whole experience, even being in Manhattan and seeing the Christmas tree on the way to Radio City was incredible for them. After you came to speak to them, they were incredibly impressed by your story. They asked me if you will be at the show, and I could tell when they saw you there, their eyes lit up. I know some of them googled your company after and the dancers that you mentioned you worked with. They had many questions they wanted to ask the Rockettes, ranging from what inspired the dancers to become Rockettes, to the technical aspects of the show, like how was it possible that the taps of the dancers sounded so loud in the theater. I think our students need more experiences like this, to be exposed to the arts, to see what opportunities exist for them in the world. For most of my students it was their first time going to see a show like this, and I think this is an experience they will remember for a very long time.

Ms. Koneva
Castle Hill Middle School

TESTIMONIALS

First and foremost, thank you so much for all the dedication and effort you put into making this happen. It was an incredible night and a wonderful experience! The students reiterated that seeing the Rockettes' precision and focus on their work inspired them to refocus their training. Some expressed that the joy the show gave them made them even more determined and motivated to keep pursuing their performing arts career. For many, it was the first time they were ever able to see the show. They expressed a lot of gratitude for the opportunity. Many said it would be a night they wouldn't forget. Thanks for everything!

Amanda A.
Lehman College



In its 15 years of existence, this is the first year our school has had a cheerleading team. We're a combination of three schools housed in the same building, so scheduling rehearsals can be an issue. On top of an already demanding academic schedule, the team has to balance learning choreography and cheers with learning about good team dynamics. Listening to Jeremy speak about his experiences and the purpose behind the Black Iris Project gave our team a real life application of what they were going through. He showed our team how passion drives success and is sustained by talent and consistent hard work. Seeing the Rockettes in the Christmas Spectacular Show, seeing their precision and showmanship, inspired them to work even harder at becoming better cheerleaders. This experience is one that us as coaches can use to inspire our team to work harder.

Mr. Palmere
Urban Assembly School for Applied Math & Science



TESTIMONIALS

We can't thank you enough for visiting us here at the AATT Academy. During your lecture our students (ages 6 to 9 years of age) had the opportunity to learn more about what a professional dancer goes through. It is so important for our students to learn about dancers who reside in our borough and you so graciously provided a wonderful example of that. During the dance class part of the workshop you challenged our students on familiar and not so familiar moves, for that we are greatly appreciative. After the workshop I saw the light in their eyes as they brought their parents over to you to catch selfies! As for their trip to Radio City Music Hall to experience the Rockettes, you have given them a once in a lifetime experience! One example of how excited they were was when the Rockettes visited them for a Q&A after the show. Their lively participation in that Q&A was an indication of their elation! We are so grateful for you!

Arthur Aviles

BAAD! the Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance



PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- Bronx Academy of Arts & Dance
- Bronx Academy of Arts & Letters
- Bronx Charter School for the Arts
- Castle Hill Middle School 127
- Computer Science High School
- DreamYard
- Hunts Point Alliance for Children
- Lehman College
- Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center
- New Settlement Community Center/NSA Girls Program/Next Level Dancers
- PS 6X - The West Farms School
- The Urban Assembly School for Applied Math and Science