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Editor and Publishing Team
Established in 2004

The Mount Vernon Inquirer

City of Mount Vernon, NY

- Online Edition -

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05-21-07

SAMBA New York! performs carnival at the Doles Center

SAMBA New York!, kicked-off its Carnival style celebration at the Doles Center on May 17. The event drew a captivated audience of samba enthusiasts. It was an outstanding evening of celebrating Brazil's most famous form of music and dance.

The event was a part of the Triple Hill Festival, a project of the Westchester Arts Council. Dr. Philip A. Galinsky, a percussionist, ethnomusicologist, singer, composer, and the founder of SAMBA New York!, led the talented ensemble. The show featured vocalist Kerry Linder, and a precision drumming ensemble (the bateria), a small Brazilian guitar (cavaquinho), and a samba dancer in full carnival regalia.

Dr. Galinsky modeled SAMBA New York! after the famous "escola de samba" or "samba school." Samba schools originated in Brazil, and foster the preservation and dissemination of the traditions of samba culture, with performers from a variety of backgrounds and ages.

Throughout the 90-minute set, audience members clapped along to familiar favorites such as "Aquarela do Brasil" or "water color of Brazil." The performers also played "Triste" which translates into sadness, a true irony because of its upbeat sound. Other selections were from the film, "Black Orpheus" and another called the "Song of the Three Races" a dedication to the country's population of Africans, native Brazilians, and Portuguese.

The audience was treated to Samba lessons by a dancer, who instructed them over the course of two songs. Participants waved hands, swayed, and moved to the beat of the percussion section with ease. SAMBA New York! also introduced two popular Brazilian songs, Antonio Carlos Jobim's "The Girl from Ipanema" and Jorge Ben Jor's "Mas Que Nada." Both were played to a samba-reggae rhythm, a more pop form of samba from the Bahia region.

Donna Jackson, Triple Hill's Creative Director, said that she first saw SAMBA New York! at various parades in New York, and had heard of Dr. Galinsky's work as a teaching artist. Dr. Galinsky is a considered a leading expert of Brazilian music in the United States. Over the past few weeks, the ensemble has done samba workshops in many of the city's public schools.

Dr. Galinsky according to Jackson, "has brought a magical experience to the elementary schools. Students have learned to embrace different cultures, especially the new students from Brazil. They have learned a few Portuguese words, and played percussion instruments."

Dr. Galinsky praised Jackson, "who has envisioned Samba New York's participation. It has been great for us to interact with the students." He expressed gratitude to Kelly Jackson, Manager of Community Arts, and the Westchester Arts Council for their support.



(l to r) Donna Jackson and Dr. Philip A. Galinsky



Members of SAMBA New York



SAMBA New York! samba dancer makes her entrance



Samba New York! in concert