



MARIA TORRES emerging artists foundation

***The Maria Torres Dance Theater Company****presented by****Raphael Benavides Productions &  
One Circle Productions****an evening of creative performances****The Latin Nutcracker - "Clara's Dream"******Poet's Den Gallery & Theater******309 E. 108<sup>th</sup> St. | New York, NY 10029******\*Gala Event December 12, 2012 • 8pm\*****additional show Sunday Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>*

This is the launch and debut of something special... an ensemble of performances by the Maria Torres Dance Theater Company. **Raphael Benavides Productions and One Circle Productions** is producing this 2012 holiday show featuring the **Maria Torres Dance Theater Company**. In an evening of music, dance, & creative expression, the company will debut excerpts of past, present and future works including the Latin Nutcracker "Clara's Dream." This gala evening will introduce the audience to the company's performance spirit and celebrate dreams becoming reality.

The **Maria Torres Dance Theater Company**, founded by Maria Torres and husband producer John O'Connor, is set to bring a new rhythm to the stage integrating Broadway, Contemporary, Ballet, African-Caribbean, Jazz, and Torres' signature Latin dance style. The objective is to expand upon the world of dance by celebrating creative expression, movement, culture, and theatrical interpretations that connect with the audience. Maria has amassed the titles of **dancer, performer, choreographer, director and producer** by being an energetic force in her field. She has been awarded on the Latin dance circuit, applauded on Broadway, invited to choreograph for Hollywood and engaged to direct major dance programs.

This event becomes the perfect time to also announce the launch of the **Maria Torres Emerging Artists Foundation (MTEAF)** the brainchild of co-founders, **Maria Torres, John O'Connor and award-winning actress and singer Vanessa Williams**. The objective is to empower pre-teens and young adults, from underserved communities, to experience and achieve their goals as professionals in the entertainment industry. Maria and John began years ago inspiring talent by offering classes and sponsoring kids in dance workshops from their own pockets. They believe dedicated talent should not be wasted due to lack of resources,

The collaboration of the co-founders began when Maria and Vanessa met on the set of "Dance with Me." That meeting grew from friends - to collaborators - to a team with a dream - to MTEAF. Now Maria, Vanessa and John with Raphael Benavides Productions are launching this holiday introduction to introduce the dance company at The Poet's Den Gallery and officially announcing the MTEAF foundation. **MTEAF:** <http://www.mteaf.org/>

**Ticket Prices: 12/12 – Gala Night \$40; 12/16 –Sundays \$20 kids meet the Cast**

We invite you to have an opportunity to cover the show and interview the founders. For interviews or attendance : please call: Contact: Michele Wilson | 917.892.6119 | Taylorlsd@aol.com

# MTEAF

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*at the Poet's Den Gallery & Theater*  
*309 E. 108<sup>th</sup> St.*  
*New York, NY 10029*  
<http://www.eastharlempresents.org>



This will be the official home of the Maria Torres Dance Theater Company. December 12th will also mark the beginning of a long partnership with The Poet's Den Theater. **Raphael Benavides**, Executive Director of East Harlem Presents and the *Poet's Den Gallery & Theater* is the **executive producer**.

The Poet's Den Theater and Gallery is one of New York's most beautiful and widely-celebrated independent theaters. Complete with a spacious gallery – ideal for pre and post-performance events – the 130-seat theater showcases a wide variety of Shakespearean plays, off-Broadway theater productions, concerts, and dance performances, as well as previews of independent, documentary, foreign, and mainstream films.

Its location in East Harlem draws an energizing mix of dedicated theater enthusiasts, students, and tourists.



# MTEAF

 MARIA TORRES emerging artists foundation

## Co-Founders



## The Maria Torres Dance Theatre Company

is a new international dance theatre company sensation featuring some of the world's most talented emerging dancers, actors, singers, and musicians. The company's troupe of elite performers presents an array of work from Shakespeare to Caribbean and executes with stunning technical virtuosity. Their performances inspired through a universal celebration of the human spirit using the Latino American cultural experience and a broad spectrum of American dance traditions.

The Company's Founder, Director-Choreographer **Maria Torres**, explores new terrain, navigating between the worlds of dance and theatre. Influenced by Broadway, Contemporary, Ballet, African-Caribbean, and Jazz, Torres' signature style also reflects her Latina pride. She is inspired by legends Alvin Ailey, Katherine Dunham and mentored by greats like Judith Jamison and Chita Rivera. Her theatrical collaborates include award-winning playwrights Carmen Rivera and Candido Tirado who bring new voices to the stage.

The Company's growing repertory spans a variety of human experiences. ***Mi Gente/My People*** embraces one neighborhood's extraordinary inhabitants on a hot summer day in Spanish Harlem. ***Goddess*** celebrates sensuality from a decidedly feminine perspective. ***Julia*** is inspired by the life and work of Julia de Burgos, one of the greatest poets of Latin America, who died a pauper and was buried in an unmarked New York City grave in 1953. ***Obsession*** explores the jealousy and unrequited love that makes the heart ache, from the upcoming Dansical, ***Salsa Nights. A Preview performance of Clara's Dream: The Latin Nutcracker*** a holiday story with a Latin twist.

**The Maria Torres Dance Theatre** appeals not only to traditional dance and theatre enthusiasts who celebrate the company's bravura technical prowess but also to a younger demographic who is attracted to the sheer excitement onstage. Another increasingly strong supporter of the Company is the Latin-American community, the fastest growing audience in North America. Don't miss this exciting theatre event!

# MTEAF

 MARIA TORRES emerging artists foundation

## Mission Statement:

Maria Torres Emerging Artists Foundation (MTEAF) which also stands for Motivation, Teaching, Education, Action, and Fellowship is a rigorous, interdisciplinary educational and mentorship program in the performing arts empowering pre-teens and young adults, from multi-ethnic and underserved communities, to achieve their goals as professionals in the entertainment industry. MTEAF looks to promote a collaborative learning environment and cultivate positive relationships at personal and professional levels.

### Educational Program

MTEAF's educational program provides artists with fundamental techniques in theater, dance and music based on their individual needs and professional goals. In addition, students receive instruction in personal character development, including self-esteem strengthening exercises and conflict resolution activities which helps them become role models and leaders of our community.

### Platform for Diversity in the Arts

MTEAF is committed to training emerging artists from multi-ethnic backgrounds and underserved communities by offering them a platform to develop, create and produce works in multimedia. These productions reflect the varied poignant human experiences of our diverse community while keeping connected to universal, relatable themes.

### Mentorship Program

MTEAF mentor program connects professional actors, directors, choreographers and singers to emerging artists in their respective disciplines. Mentors provide students with professional guidance and moral support throughout the various stages of members' professional development.

### MTEAF is committed to:

- Cultivating exceptional talent in the performing arts
- Enhancing the educational experience of our students
- Building active role models and community leaders
- Improving character and self-esteem
- Promoting multi-ethnic inclusiveness in the entertainment industry
- Providing a platform for actors, dancers and singers to create original work
- Facilitating career opportunities through industry connections
- Developing community outreach programs for social benefit
- Producing accessible and quality entertainment for our community

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## Maria Torres Emerging Artists Foundation (MTEAF)

also stands for Motivation, Teaching, Education, Action, and Fellowship is a rigorous, interdisciplinary educational and mentorship program in the performing arts empowering pre-teens and young adults, from multi-ethnic and underserved communities, to achieve their goals as professionals in the entertainment industry.

MTEAF is the brainchild of producer/ choreographer Maria Torres, award winning actress and singer Vanessa Williams, and producer John O'Connor. The dream was sparked some years ago when John and Maria sponsored talented kids from their own pockets. It was their thinking that dedicated creative talent should not be wasted because of lack of resources. The collaboration of the co-founders began when Maria and Vanessa meet on the set of *"Dance with Me"*. That meeting revealed a common focus to mentor and inspire young creative talent.

The goal is to promote a collaborative learning environment that will cultivate positive creative relationships for its' artists through mentoring programs and professional guidance. The foundations will offer programs that connect professional actors, directors, choreographers and singers with developing artists in their respective disciplines.

MTEAF is committed to training emerging artists and offering them a platform to develop, create and produce works in theatre or on the entertainment stage. The purpose is to shape, highlight, and exhibit the exceptional talent of those artist who have unwavering dedication and a passion for their craft. The mastery comes from holding each artist to the highest standards of excellence in the performing arts.

MTEAF's members and audiences will receive a showcase of talent in various productions throughout the year that will be open to our communities. Each production will reflect the varied poignant human experiences of our diverse community while keeping connected to universal, relatable themes. MTEAF: <http://www.mteaf.org/>

# MTEAF

 MARIA TORRES emerging artists foundation

## Co-Founders



**MTEAF**, the dream and brainchild of producer/ choreographer Maria Torres, award-winning actress and singer Vanessa Williams, and producer John O'Connor, began when Maria and Vanessa meet on the set of *"Dance with Me"*. That meeting developed from friends - to collaborators - to a team with a dream – to MTEAF, the Maria Torres Emerging Artists Foundation.

**Maria Torres** is a skilled master of movement and a creative visionary of dance and performance. She has amassed years of experience as a dancer, performer, choreographer, director and producer. She has been awarded on the Latin dance circuit and applauded on the critically acclaimed Broadway in hit *"Swing"*; choreographed large Disney projects such as *"Enchanted"* and worked with Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony on *"El Cantante."*; TV's *"So You Think You Can Dance"* invited her as a guest choreographer and she produced amazing live opening performances for Don Omar on the Latin Billboard awards.

**Vanessa Williams** is one of the most respected and multi-faceted performers in entertainment today. She has conquered the music charts with classic hits as *"Save the Best For Last,"*; took Broadway by storm winning the hearts of critics and becoming a box-office sensation in *"Kiss of the Spider Woman"*; lighting up the big screen in hits such as *"Eraser," "Hoodlum," "Soul Food,"* and *"Dance With Me,"* ; and taking television to the next level with memorable characters on two critically acclaimed hit shows *"Ugly Betty"* and *"Desperate Housewives."*; and in April of 2012, she and her mother landed on the New York Times Best Seller list with her memoir. She has sold millions of albums worldwide, earned numerous individual and ensemble awards, and achieved critical acclaim as an actress on stage, in film and on television.

**John O'Connor** has over twenty-five years experience in the entertainment industry, which began as a successful fashion model and transitioned into his current position as co-owner, right hand and producer of Maria Torres Productions. Aside from his key role with the business of the dance theater company, John is responsible for managing artists' relations for film and theatre productions around the world.

# MTEAF

 MARIA TORRES emerging artists foundation

## Maria Torres | BIO

Dancer | Choreographer | Director | Producer

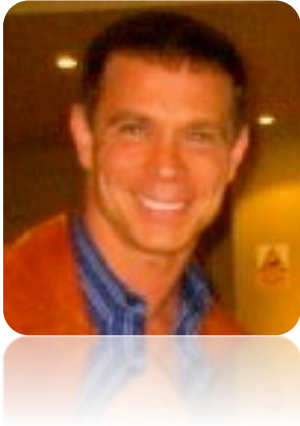
The power of a director / choreographer is defined when they have the understanding of how to create an energy that reflects the best of the dancers movements while building an environment that engages an audience on an emotional level. **Maria Torres Dancer, Performer, Choreographer, Director and Producer**, has this knowledge, vision and professional expertise

Her resume and credits tout successes from all angles - film, television, theater and the dance circuit. She has appeared on Broadway in the very successful hit, *"Swing"* and in the movie *"Dance with Me"* starring Chayanne and Vanessa Williams. It was this project where she embraced the understanding of how the camera related to dance and the movements. Her understanding and expertise allowed her the opportunity to work with master choreographer John O'Connell and train actors Patrick Dempsey and Amy Adams in Disney's *"Enchanted"*, Raven Simone in *"College Road Trip"*, and choreograph Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony in *"El Cantante"*.

Recently Maria was given the honor of producing and choreographing the opening performance for the Latin Billboard awards starring Reggaeton artist Don Omar. She was guest choreographer on the hit show *"So You Think You Can Dance"*; choreographed the upcoming Movie *"Fugly"* a Feature Film starring John Leguizamo, Radha Mitchell and Rosie Perez; and *"The Six Wives of Henry Le Fay"* starring Tim Allen, Andie McDowell, Jenna Elfman, Epatha Merkerson and Paz Vega.

One of her personal projects is MTEAF the Maria Torres Emerging Artists Foundation. This is an interdisciplinary education and mentorship program of the performing arts. The objective is to empower pre-teens and young adults, from multi-ethnic and underserved communities, to achieve their goals as professionals in the entertainment industry.

# MTEAF

 MARIA TORRES emerging artists foundation

## John O'Connor | BIO

Co-Founder | Producer

John O'Connor has over twenty-five years experience in the entertainment industry. He began as a successful fashion model where he learned the importance of understanding the industry, knowing your value, and recognizing the need for mentors and advisors to help artist on their path.

Long before transitioning into his current role as co-owner of Maria Torres Productions and Co-founder of MTEAF, John and Maria, the husband and wife duo, were championing and mentoring talent through classes and being the advisors to help students on their journey.

His current position is co-owner and producer of Maria Torres Productions where he works to guide and support the creative vision and maintain business affairs for the company. Aside from his key role with the company, John is responsible for managing artists' relations for film and theatre productions around the world.

Through the Maria Torres Dance Theater Company and MTEAF, John along with Vanessa Williams and Maria Torres will work to bring arts to the schools and provide a platform for young emerging artists to perform alongside seasoned professionals.

### Producer Credits:

- Growing Up Gonzales – Off Broadway Production
- Don Omar's stage show - 2012 Billboard Awards
- Microsoft Product Launch - Herald Square
- A Conversation with Tony Winner Hinton Battle -Theater Presentation
- The Magic of Salsa Kingdom -Theatrical Presentation
- Seaside Summer Concert Series.
- Pathmark Hispanic Arts Festival



# MTEAF

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## Vanessa Williams | BIO

Co-Founder | Award Winning Actress | Producer

Vanessa Williams is one of the most respected and multi-faceted performers in entertainment today. She has conquered the music charts, Broadway, television and motion pictures. She has sold millions of albums worldwide and she has achieved critical acclaim as an actress on stage, in film and on television.

Her albums earned multiple Grammy nominations and have yielded such classic hits as *"Save the Best For Last,"* as well as the Academy Award-winning single, *"Colors of the Wind,"* from Disney's *"Pocahontas."*

In 1994, Vanessa took Broadway by storm winning the hearts of critics and becoming a box-office sensation in *"Kiss of the Spider Woman."* She garnered rave reviews and was nominated for a Tony Award for the 2002 revival of *"Into the Woods."*

Vanessa made her film debut in 1986 in *"Under the Gun."* She has starred in such features as *"Eraser," "Hoodlum," "Soul Food," "Dance With Me," "Light It Up," "Shaft" and "Johnson Family Vacation."* On television, Vanessa has starred in *"Stompin' at the Savoy," "The Boy Who Loved Christmas," "The Jacksons: An American Dream,"* ABC's revival of *"Bye, Bye Birdie."* She executive produced and starred in Lifetime's *"The Courage to Love"* for Lifetime and the VH1 Original Movie, *"A Diva's Christmas Carol."*

In addition to numerous individual and ensemble awards and nominations, she earned three Emmy nominations as the deliciously wicked Wilhelmina Slater in ABC's critically-acclaimed hit series, *"Ugly Betty,"* and in 2010, she moved to Wisteria Lane on ABC's hit show *"Desperate Housewives,"* where she stirred things up for the final two seasons, winning an NAACP Image Award. She currently plays Olivia, the stylish wife of the devilish Gavin (Terry O'Quinn) in ABC's supernatural drama *"666 Park Avenue."*

In April 2012, Vanessa and her mother Helen landed on the New York Times Best Seller list with their memoir, *"You Have No Idea: A Famous Daughter, Her No-Nonsense Mother, and How They Survived Pageants, Hollywood, Love, Loss (and Each Other)."*

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Dancer | Choreographer | Producer

# Maria Torres

