

For Immediate Release  
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#DanceBringsUsTogether  
#DanceParadeNYC  
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## DANCE PARADE 2021 ANNOUNCES THE GRAND MARSHALS

The 15th Annual Dance Parade has been scheduled to take place online, Saturday, May 22, starting at 1 PM under the theme, "Dance Brings Us Together".

Heading the event will be Grand Marshals LISA LISA; the Latina Pop Music Legend, Dance Theatre of Harlem founding member and current Artistic Director VIRGINIA JOHNSON; and H.T. CHEN & DIAN DONG, founding directors of Chen Dance Center.

A \$20 donation is suggested, and viewing is free for artists and low income viewers. Visit [www.danceparade.org](http://www.danceparade.org).

"Each of this year's Grand Marshals embodies positive persistence in the face not only of the pandemic but a persistent history of marginalization," noted Dance Parade's Grand Marshal Committee Chair DJ McDonald. "Their presence as heralds of hope and love brings a special significance to the 15th annual Parade's celebration of the re-emergence of dance as an activity and pursuit that brings us together. Alongside these artistic and hopeful heroes, we embrace a creative approach of awareness, sensitivity, inclusion and social justice in the nascent post-pandemic moment."

## 2021 THEME: DANCE BRINGS US TOGETHER

2021  
GRAND  
MARSHALS:



**LISA LISA**  
Latina Pop Music Legend



**VIRGINIA JOHNSON**  
Artistic Director  
Dance Theatre of Harlem



**H.T. CHEN  
& DIAN DONG**  
Chen Dance Center

### LISA LISA

One of the greatest Latin Hip Hop/Freestyle/Pop divas to come out of the 1980's music scene, the legendary Lisa Velez, also known as Lisa Lisa lead the 80's supergroup Lisa Lisa & Cult Jam.

The group shot straight up the charts and went platinum several times over with their first few albums. Starting with *Lisa Lisa & Cult Jam with Full Force*, they repeated with their second album *Spanish Fly* by crossing over to the pop charts, sealing that success with *Straight to the Sky*, their third album. In the 90's, their fourth album *Straight Out of Hell's Kitchen* was named after Lisa Velez's childhood neighborhood.

The youngest of ten children, Lisa aspired to be a singer early on. In one visit to a nightclub Lisa met Mike Hughes, one of the music producers who would launch her career, Together with Alex Mosley, the trio christened Lisa Lisa & Cult Jam, began their rise to super-stardom.

Lisa Lisa became the first Latin platinum artist to be recognized nationwide, paving the way for such later female artists as Selena and Jennifer Lopez. Lisa showed her acting ability with appearances in *West Side Story* on stage; the Nickelodeon series *Taina* on TV; and an appearance on *Law & Order*. The artist continues to tour the world with her band SoDisrespectful and her dance ensemble, and continues to create new tours, new music, and more TV appearances.

### VIRGINIA JOHNSON

Artistic Director of Dance Theatre of Harlem since 2013, Virginia was a founding member and principal dancer with the Company for more than twenty years. Born in Washington D.C. she graduated from the Academy of the Washington School of Ballet and briefly attended the School of the Arts at NYU before joining DTH in 1969. Universally recognized as one of the major ballerinas of her generation, she is perhaps best known for her performances in *Giselle*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *Fall River Legend*.

Virginia's honors include a Young Achiever Award from the National Council of Women, Outstanding Young Woman of America, a Dance Magazine Award, a Pen and Brush Achievement Award, the Washington Performing Arts Society's 2008-9 Pola Nirenska Lifetime Achievement Award, the 2009 Martha Hill Fund Mid-Career Award, and an honorary doctorate from Cornish College of the Arts. In 2016 she was honored by First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House for her contribution to the field of dance. In 2018 she held the Brackett Visiting Artist Chair at the University of Oklahoma and is the recipient of the 2019 CORPS de Ballet International Lifetime Achievement Award.

### **H.T. CHEN & DIAN DONG**

H.T. Chen and Dian Dong co-founded Chen Dance Center as a major dance school and theater in the heart of Manhattan's Chinatown with H.T. as Artistic Director. Located for many years at 70 Mulberry Street, a tragic fire there in January 2020, took with it the fully equipped theater, dance studios and dressing rooms, costumes, three pianos, and much more and damaged the building so badly that it will be torn down. H.T. and Dian have bravely continued their classes and activities thanks to housing offered by the Paul Taylor School and Gibney Dance.

Born in Shanghai and raised in Taiwan, H.T. graduated from the Chinese Culture University in Taipei, then The Juilliard School and NYU in NYC. As a choreographer, he has become a recognized voice for his community and has created a body of work that addresses themes of Chinese-American labor, immigration and culture. His choreography has been presented frequently at LaMaMa E.T.C., and on other concert stages, off-Broadway and on TV. He has worked with DTW's National Performance Network, and coordinated the Asian Arts Partnership Program, which served as an ongoing cultural exchange between American and Asian artists.

H.T.'s many awards include Fellowships from the NEA, grants from NYSCA, Jerome Foundation and Meet the Composer, and a NYS Governor's Award for artistic achievement and contributions to communities. H.T. has also received a BESSIE Award Special Citation, a Mayor's Award for Arts and Culture, and awards from The Organization of Chinese Americans, and from CUNY Asian Alumni Association.

Dian Dong continues to organize and design the education programs sponsored by the Chen Dance Center, including workshops and performances serving schools citywide. With the Dance Education Lab, Dian helped design a new K-12 curriculum for the NYC Dept. of Education on The History of Chinatown Through the Lens of Dance. She

participated in the Kennedy Center's Capacity Building Program led by Michael Kaiser, and attended the Executive Program for Non-Profit Leaders-Arts at Stanford Graduate Business School.

She and husband H.T. received a 2012 Mid-Career Award from the Martha Hill Dance Fund. Dian also graduated from The Juilliard School, and has danced professionally with many contemporary groups as well as in the national tour of *The King & I*. In addition to Chen Dance Center, she has taught at NYU and the Center for Modern Dance Education.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Dance Parade New York is the world's only street parade to exclusively celebrate and showcase the diversity of dance. This annual celebration of eclectic dance styles from around the world, features over ten thousand dancers, and presents more than 80 unique styles of dance.

Launched in 2006, Dance Parade is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to celebrate diversity by presenting as many forms of dance and culture as possible. The organization offers free dance programs to schools and community centers throughout New York City.

The 15th Annual Dance Parade and Festival is made possible in part with private support as well as public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. For our Media Kit, including high resolution photos, full bios of our Grand Marshals, information about Dance Parade and our education programs please visit: [danceparade.org/media-kit-releases](http://danceparade.org/media-kit-releases)

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