



The Dancewave Company is looking to raise the cash to perform at the prestigious Aberdeen International Youth Festival in Scotland this July.

STEPS TO STARDOM

BY BEN CHAPMAN
DAILY NEWS WRITER

WITH a little cash, their dance dreams could be reality.

An amateur Park Slope dance company is set to perform at a prestigious arts festival in Scotland — the only American troupe picked for the festival.

But there's a wrinkle for the Dancewave Company: The teenage dancers will only be able to go if they can raise enough money to pay for the trip.

"It's a dream come true to go to Europe," said Dancewave dancer Nola Smith, 17. The company won a chance to perform in the Aberdeen International Youth Festival next July. "We just need to come up with funding."

Park Slope dancers seek funds for fest

Dancewave is made up of 15 teenage girls and one male dancer. About half of the company's dancers come from low-income families and receive scholarships for classes at the Fourth Ave. studio. If they make it to Scotland it will be the first time most have left the country.

The dancers are doing a variety of things to raise money, starting with a benefit performance tomorrow in Park Slope.

"We hope people will come from all over the borough to see the performance," said company director Diane Jacobowitz. "We

have some very talented kids from all over Brooklyn and we need to raise money for our trip."

Jacobowitz and the Dancewave dancers applied in August and learned last month that they were chosen to perform at Aberdeen from July 27-Aug. 7, 2010.

The company is slated to give nine modern dance performances at the festival, which attracts 30,000 people to more than 70 events throughout northeast Scotland.

The dancers have already selected routines to perform by the choreographers Paul Taylor and Jawole Willa Jo Zollar.

It will cost about \$29,000 for the dancers to take the trip and if they can't raise the full amount by April they won't be able to go.

To help raise money the company is holding a benefit performance tomorrow at 2:30 p.m. at P.S. 77 in Park Slope. Tickets are \$7 in advance and \$10 at the door.

"We're working hard to represent Brooklyn in Europe," said dancer Kelly Rodriguez, 16, who lives in East New York. "We're down-to-earth in Brooklyn but we get the job done. Go Brooklyn!"

To buy advance tickets for Dancewave's Holiday Fiesta Fundraiser call (718) 522-4696 or visit www.dancewave.org.

The Brooklyn Paper Your Neighborhood — Your News®

Help send these dancers to Scotland

By Barry Shifrin
for The Brooklyn Paper

Park Slope's own teenage dance troupe is one high-step closer to strutting its stuff on the world stage.

The 16 dancing teenagers of Dancewave, the Fourth Avenue-based instructional studio, have been selected to perform at the Aberdeen International Youth Festival in Scotland next June — but the group still needs to raise roughly \$29,000 to get them across the pond.

"We applied and when got accepted, we thought, 'We'll find some way to do this,'" said Princeton Spicer, 17, the troupe's sole male.

This week, Dancewave just might have found that way. Nick Kotsonis, the owner of Park Slope Health and Fitness, stepped forward with a pledge to match up to \$10,000 in donations. The group has been receiving financial aid in smaller ways, too.

"We got a small donation from someone we didn't even know," said Sarah Bernbaum, 15. A Rhode Island man who heard about the group's selection to the prestigious dance event and donated \$10.

"He said that his wife was a dancer and she had recently passed away," said Bernbaum. "It was really sweet. ... He said he hung our picture in his office."

The kids have been contributing to the tab in their own way as well, from donating their babysitting money to hosting a "Holiday Fiesta," where the group performed and sold baked goods.

"We're doing whatever it takes," said Patrice Alyssa Roth, 17. "We're really looking forward to the trip."

Dancewave Executive Director Diane Jacobowitz said she's ecstatic about the idea of the kids going to Scotland.

"There'll be theater groups from all over Europe ... drum groups from Ghana, painters from Japan," she said. "The kids all get housed together at the University of Aberdeen. They'll get to share their culture and learn others' cultures."

As the only American group selected, Dancewave would represent not only Brooklyn, but the entire United States.



Dance students (from left) Sara DeBerry, Patrice Alyssa Roth, Princeton Spicer, Brittney Dunbar, and Kelly Rodriguez are hoping to go to Scotland to teach those kilt-wearing yahoos how to get down.

The Brooklyn Paper

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Boro Po

January 20, 2010 / News / Park Slope

Dancewave is victimized by a travel agent scam

By Gersh Kuntzman

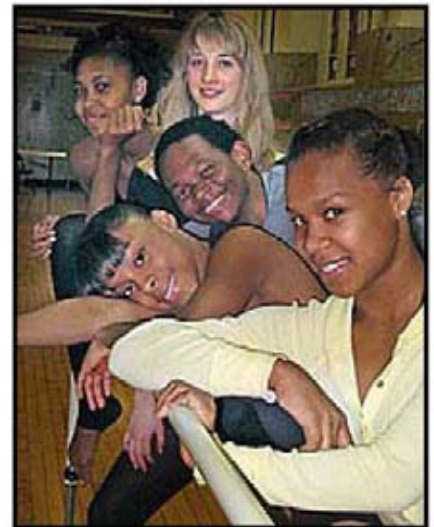
The Brooklyn Paper

A Park Slope youth dance troupe that was selected to perform at an elite international competition had its airfare money stolen by a fly-by-night travel agent — and it's unclear if the kids will be able to attend the prestigious event.

The head of Dancewave Studio told police last week that a \$8,585 check that was intended to cover some of the plane tickets for her two dozen teenage performers was stolen by a travel agent who claimed that she had booked and paid for the tickets through the Virginia office of Adam Travel Services, an international travel agency specializing in Islamic pilgrimages.

A smaller amount of money was also stolen off of the Dancewave credit card by the same woman, said Diane Jacobowitz, the director of the 15-year-old troupe, which was to be the only American company at the prestigious 2010 Aberdeen International Youth Festival.

"We are sick to death about this," Jacobowitz told The Brooklyn Paper on Tuesday. "These kids raised the money themselves, with a benefit concert and by even pooling their baby-sitting money. To be scammed like this is just horrifying."



The Brooklyn Paper / Barry Shifrin

In happier times: Young dancers of Dancewave were all smiles when their troupe learned that it would be going to Scotland. But the money has been stolen by a rogue travel agent, cops say.

In a subsequent statement, Jacobowitz added, "While it is unfortunate that some people would steal money from children, Dancewave is working with its bank to recover the lost money. Dancewave guarantees that no parent or child will lose a penny. The trip to Scotland will take place as scheduled."

Here's how the scam went down, according to Jacobowitz.

Last month, she wrote a check for \$8,585 and authorized a credit card payment for a lesser amount to a "travel consolidator" who had been recommended by the parent of one of her dancers. That parent had used the consolidator for a trip to Jamaica, and the agent promised to book a block of tickets for the young dancers at a half-priced group rate.

Jacobowitz received receipts for the July bookings via e-mail, and was satisfied that the transaction was complete.

But on Jan. 15, she got a frenzied call from the parent who had recommended the travel consolidator telling her that the woman had never actually paid for the Jamaica ticket. Jacobowitz then went back to her travel documents, and sure enough, her booking receipts also indicated that the seats had been set aside, but had not been paid for.

"This whole thing is a tragedy," said Jacobowitz, who spent Tuesday telling parents the bad news. "Every time I think about this, I start to cry. These kids raised money by themselves. This is just so wrong."

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Dancewave is victimized by a travel agent scam

By Gersh Kuntzman

*Last Updated: 12:00 PM, January 20, 2010
Posted: 12:00 PM, January 20, 2010*

The head of Dancewave Studio told police last week that a \$8,585 check that was intended to cover some of the plane tickets for her two dozen teenage performers was stolen by a travel agent who claimed that she had booked and paid for the tickets through the Virginia office of Adam Travel Services, an international travel agency specializing in Islamic pilgrimages.

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newsroom@cnglocal.com

Members of the Dancewave troupe are scrambling to raise money for trip to a festival in Scotland after being scammed. Company director Diane Jacobowitz (inset) holds receipt for the money she sent the fake travel agent. Photo by Linda Rosier/Daily News



Modern dance, old con

BY BEN CHAPMAN
DAILY NEWS WRITER

TALK ABOUT a low blow.

A phony travel agent stole more than \$8,000 from an amateur Park Slope teen dance company — and now the group may not be able to perform as planned at a summer arts festival in Scotland.

"It's a setback, but I don't want people to feel pity for us," said Dancewave company director Diane Jacobowitz. "We're tough, and we're going to make it to Scotland."

Dancewave won a slot last October to perform at the prestigious Aberdeen Festival, which attracts 30,000 people to more than 70 events throughout northeast Scotland from July 27 through Aug. 7.

The only catch is that the 16-member company needs to pay its own way, and about half of

Group scammed out of \$8,000 for trip

the company's dancers come from low-income families and receive scholarships to pay for classes.

To raise money, the dancers pooled their earnings from babysitting and odd jobs, and solicited donations from friends and family.

Last month, the Daily News published an article about the group's efforts, which inspired a local businessman to pledge \$10,000 in matching donations for the trip, Jacobowitz said. And a Dec. 5 benefit raised \$1,500 for the journey.

Acting on a recommendation from a dancer's parent, Jacobowitz bought 15 plane tickets — for \$8,585 — for company members from Maryland travel agent Nina Betru.

Things seemed fine until last Friday, when the parent who recommended Betru told Jacobowitz that tickets she'd bought for a trip to Jamaica never materialized.

"I was reeling when I got the call," said Jacobowitz. "My first thought was to get the money back."

Jacobowitz called Alexandria, Va.-based Adams Travel, where Betru claimed to work, but was told the tickets did not exist and that Betru did not work there.

Jacobowitz also filed a police report with the NYPD, which are investigating the case.

Adams Travel manager Hosam Mansour told The News the bogus agent used the same scheme to rip off about 50 people

for approximately \$50,000 over a six-week period beginning three months ago.

Betru also pulled the same scam at another Alexandria travel agency, Fana Travel, ripping off 20 would-be fliers for an additional \$30,000, according to KB Argeai, a manager there.

Both agencies filed reports with the Fairfax County police, who are investigating.

Jacobowitz said Dancewave now needs to raise about \$45,000 to pay for the troupe's trip.

"I have faith the people out there are going to come forward to help us," she said. "We'll recover from this."

The group is holding a Spring Celebration fund-raiser for the trip at Danspace Project in Manhattan on June 11 and 12.

To buy advance tickets call (718) 522-4696 or visit www.dancewave.org.



Updated: Fri., Feb. 19, 2010, 9:03 AM

Minuet in civil court! Dancewave sues rogue travel agent

By Gersh Kuntzman

Last Updated: 9:03 AM, February 19, 2010

Posted: 11:55 AM, February 17, 2010

scammed out of more than \$10,000 on the eve of a triumphant trip to an international recital fired back on Tuesday, suing the travel agency that allegedly profited from the swindle.

Dancewave lawyer Jay Itkowitz filed a civil suit in Manhattan claiming fraud by Adam Travel Services, a Virginia-based agency that has an office on West 38th Street.

The tragic story actually began with a great moment of joy, when Dancewave owner Diane Jacobowitz learned that her teen dancers were the only American company to be selected to perform at the prestigious 2010 Aberdeen International Youth Festival.

Jacobowitz said she wrote a check for \$8,585 and authorized a credit card payment for a lesser amount to a "travel consolidator" who had been recommended by the parent of one of her dancers. That parent had used the consolidator for a trip to Jamaica, and the agent promised to book a block of tickets for the young dancers at a half-priced group rate.

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That consolidator has not explained where Dancewave's money ended up, said Itkowitz, who is handling the case for free. His case goes after Adam Travel, which specialized in Islamic pilgrimage trips, because the consolidator was working "as an agent of Adam."

"Adam committed fraud against [Dancewave] ... by intentionally misrepresenting that it had purchased airline tickets for its students with knowledge of the falsity of the statement," Itkowitz's court papers said.

Worse, Dancewave's performers are not wealthy scions or debutantes.

"Most of the students involved could not afford to take this trip," Itkowitz wrote in his court papers. "But they were so excited about this special opportunity that they held a special fundraising dance performance and even babysat to get the money necessary for the trip."

A woman at the Manhattan office of Adam Travel said that her office had "never heard of this situation" and that Dancewave would need to serve the main office in Boston with papers. The woman would not give her name.

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AT A GLANCE

GREENPOINT — The Chairmen of the Bored presents the “I Love New York” segment of its five minutes series at 7:30 p.m. today at The Word Bookstore, 126 Franklin St.

If you have a story that sums up what life in N.Y.C. is really like, come share it in five minutes or less. RSVP to thechairmen@chairmenofthebored.com. Call (718) 383-0096 or visit <http://wordbrooklyn.com>.

DOWNTOWN — Catalyst Production presents a limited run of the play “Shoot 2 Win” at the Kumble theater for the Performing Arts, 1 University Plaza.

The sassy and gritty play is set in a locker room during the finals of a female basketball tournament and features an all-female cast. Curtain times are 7:30 p.m. tonight through Saturday, with 3 p.m. matinees Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$22 and \$15. Call (718) 488-1624 or visit www.kumbletheater.org.

BEDFORD-STUYVESANT

— The unveiling of “Undeniable,” an exhibition of new works by award-winning visual artist Alonzo Adams and emerging collage artist Monique Luck debuts with a meet-the-artists reception on Saturday at the House of Art Gallery, 373 Lewis Ave.

The reception is from 6 to 10 p.m. For more information about the gallery or exhibit, call (347) 663-8195 or visit the Web site at www.nychouseofart.com.

DOUGLASTON — Elementary school students from Queens and Brooklyn will come face-to-face with their “angels” today.

A hundred kids from schools within the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens are set to meet the heretofore anonymous donors who contributed half of each student’s tuition. The “Be an Angel to a Student” program, run by Futures in Education Foundation, helps support inner-city Catholic school students.

The event will take place at the Immaculate Conception Center, 72-00 Douglaston Parkway, Douglaston.

Gayle DeWees

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HAPPY FEET — AGAIN

BY BEN CHAPMAN
DAILY NEWS WRITER

HE’S THE ANGEL of Park Slope.

A neighborhood businessman is coming to the rescue of a local dance company that was ripped off on its way to performing at an arts festival in Scotland.

The amateur teen troupe Dancewave won a slot last October to perform at the prestigious Aberdeen Festival — the only American group invited to perform.

The only wrinkle was the company had to pay its own way to the festival, which runs from July 27 through Aug. 7 and is expected to attract 30,000 people.

Raising that kind of money was

Biz owner helps dance troupe finance trip

a tall order, especially since half of the troupe’s 16 members come from low-income families.

“Most of our kids couldn’t afford to go to Europe without this trip,” said company director Diane Jacobowitz. “It’s an opportunity of a lifetime, and they worked hard for it.”

To raise money for the trip, the scrappy teens — who practice out of PS 77 on Park Place — pooled their baby-sitting cash, held benefit performances and asked friends and family for help.

They were on their way to paying for the journey when a phony travel agent ripped them off for almost \$9,000 in January.

“I couldn’t believe anyone could be so heartless,” said dancer Nola Smith, 17. “It was a terrible shock to all of us.”

Police are investigating the case, but the money is still missing.

The dancers’ luck turned around when Nick Kotsonis, the owner of Slope Health and Fitness, read about their troubles in the Daily News.

“When I read the story, I thought it was a great opportunity for these kids,” said Kotsonis, 44, whose family opened the Purity Diner on Seventh Ave. in 1929 and sold it in 1986. “They’re good kids and they deserve this chance.”

The third-generation Park Slope businessman pledged to donate \$10,000 to the troupe if it could first raise \$10,000 on its own.

Last week, the group exceeded its \$10,000 fund-raising goal, and Kotsonis is ready to deliver on his pledge.

He’ll present his check to Dancewave at an open-to-the-public rehearsal next Wednesday at PS 77.

It’s enough money to guarantee the dancers will make the trip, but the troupe still needs to raise another \$20,000 to pay for the journey in full.

To attend Wednesday’s event or make a donation, visit www.dancewave.org or call (718) 522-4696.



Nick Kotsonis, owner of Slope Health and Fitness, made a matching pledge of 10G to Dancewave. He’s making good on it. Photo by Nicholas Fevelo

Postal group needs cash to put stamp on soldier support

BY MIKE McLAUGHLIN
DAILY NEWS WRITER

A PATRIOTIC Dyker Heights group that paid shipping costs for packages sent to soldiers in the Mideast is struggling to raise cash after a U.S. Postal Service crackdown.

Post Office employees and volunteers raked in \$10,000 a year for the postage fund, but donations slowed to a trickle after the USPS banned souvenir sales and donations in the 13th Ave. branch in 2008.

“When we were raising money here, we always had funds,” said USPS clerk Lucille Lovisi, who added that the Postal workers raised more than \$52,000 before their efforts were shut down.

“It was never a problem, but now packages sit around a little longer,” said Lovisi.

Sometimes, there’s only enough money to cover part of the bulk mailings organized by Boy Scout troops and local schools.

“We can’t really handle 25 boxes at a time,” said Lovisi.

That’s because USPS officials ordered them to stop taking collections from customers and selling knickknacks like American flags in the branch lobby, which federal officials said violated Postal Service policy.

“There was never any fund-raising allowed on the Post Office grounds. They were doing it on their own,” said USPS spokeswoman Darleen Reid-DeMeo.

The program has been kept alive by the Dyker Heights Civic Association — which passes the hat at meetings and neighborhood events — but donations have fallen to as little as \$3,000-\$4,000 a year.

“It’s been very hard to keep up with demand,” admitted civic association president Fran Vella-Marrone. “It’s just on a hand-to-mouth basis. We raise the money, and out it goes.”

The program started small, but rapidly took off.

Lovisi hatched the fund with co-workers in 2003 when they discovered local hero Marine Sgt. Edward Chin — who draped the Stars and Stripes over a gigantic Saddam Hussein statue in Baghdad in 2003 before American troops toppled it.

At first, they paid to ship packages to Chin from his relatives in an impromptu “adopt a soldier” program, but they expanded their generosity to cover the mailings to any overseas soldier.

It became a popular local charity, although it was never formally incorporated.

“It’s really a very positive thing,” said Fort Hamilton Army base spokeswoman Cathy SantoPietro. “It’s been there for so many families.”



Dancewave cashes in

By Michèle De Meglio

Last Updated: 6:40 PM, March 10, 2010

Posted: 6:40 PM, March 10, 2010

A Park Slope dance troupe is one step closer to international acclaim.

The Dancewave Company, which caters to talented teenagers training to become professional dancers, has received \$10,000 from S Clubs Fitness and a free airfare donation from British Airways. Dancewave, located at 45 Fourth Avenue, now has half the money necessary to send its dancers to the Aberdeen International Youth Festival in Scotland.

"I feel very heartened that the community has come forward to help us," Dancewave Executive and Artistic Director Diane Jacobowitz told this paper. "For so many of these kids, this will be their first time out of the country. It's going to be an incredible once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

The donations are extra sweet since Dancewave was conned out of more than \$8,500 earlier this year. According to reports, a travel agent accepted a check to cover plane tickets for Dancewave's young performers but made off with the money.

After learning of the scam, Park Slope residents rallied around Dancewave.

"It's a happy ending," Jacobowitz noted. "But it's not completely over because we are still only halfway there."

Dancewave will be the only American troupe performing at the festival in Scotland. The teens will perform modern dance pieces created by famous choreographers, including Mark Morris and Twyla Tharp.

Dancewave must raise another \$20,000 for the trip.

"We believed in our heart that we would make this trip happen in spite of everything," Jacobowitz said. "We still have a ways to go, but for the first time our goal is in sight. I hope that people will see our story and help us close that final gap!"

To donate to Dancewave, call 718-522-4696 or e-mail info@dancewave.org. For more details about the company, visit www.dancewave.org.

Check out www.sclusfit.com to learn more about S Clubs Fitness, located at 808 Union Street.

mdemeglio@cnglocal.com

‘Check’ it out — Slope man gives big bucks to scammed Dancewave troupe!

March 12, 2010 / News / Park Slope
By Gersh Kuntzman
The Brooklyn Paper

He took the high road — and now the young dancers of Dancewave in Park Slope are closer to their dream of performing in Scotland.

Nick Kotsonis, owner of the S Club fitness center on Union Street, came through with a \$10,000 donation to underwrite the troupe’s July trip to an international youth festival in Aberdeen after a travel agent scammed the company out of more than \$10,000 last year.

He presented the check at the Fourth Avenue dance center on Wednesday. British Airways has also kicked in free airfare, after reading The Brooklyn Paper’s account of the scam. As a result of the outpouring of support Dancewave now has half the money it needs.

“I feel very heartened that the community has come forward to help us,” said Diane Jacobowitz, the troupe’s executive director. “For so many of these kids, this will be their first time out of the country. It’s going to be an incredible once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

That said, about \$20,000 still needs to be raised. Before the travel agency scam, the dancers raised their own money, hosting bake sales and setting up a baby-sitting service to pay their own way to the festival, where they will be the only American troupe performing.

To donate, call (718) 522-4696 or e-mail info@dancewave.org.

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'Check' it out — Slope man gives big bucks to scammed Dancewave troupe!

By Gersh Kuntzman

Last Updated: 11:55 AM, March 17, 2010
Posted: 11:55 AM, March 17, 2010

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To donate, call (718) 522-4696 or e-mail info@dancewave.org.

gkuntzman@cnglocal.com

Legal fancy footwork gets Dancewave its money back

By Claire Glass
for The Brooklyn Paper

The Park Slope youth dance troupe that was cheated out of more than \$10,000 earlier this year by a rogue travel agent is finally getting its money back.

A lawyer who volunteered his services to the Fourth Avenue company after reading our coverage of the theft said this week that a bank is going to restore the troupe's funds.

"We're feeling great," said Dancewave Director Diane Jacobowitz. "This is a real fairy tale story."

It's a fairy tale story that almost didn't get its happy ending. The troupe was invited to compete in the Aberdeen International Youth Festival in Scotland last fall, and from there, Dancewave's teenaged ensemble worked to raise the money with a benefit show, and part-time jobs.

But Jacobowitz was swindled by an imposter travel agent claiming to work for Virginia-based Adam Travel Services — who absconded with more than \$10,000. Instead of buying the airline tickets, the crook only reserved the flights — taking the money and depositing it in a private account.

News reports of the scam initiated an outpouring of support from the community, including the pro-bono work of lawyer Jay Itkowitz.

Itkowitz targetted Adam Travel, but the agency said that it had been was scammed by the rogue agent, too. That statement allowed Itkowitz to go to Wachovia Bank, which agreed to swallow the loss on the grounds that it had accepted the agent's fraudulent check.

"Ultimately the bank that accepts the fraudulent deposit is on the hook for the loss," said Itkowitz.

Other Park Slope businesses got behind the troupe to help, including workers at Corcoran Realty, who pooled their money and also got their friends involved. British Airways also offered support.

And Nick Kotsonis, owner of the S Club fitness center on Union Street, came through with a \$10,000 donation of his own.

"Everybody has been so generous and supportive," said Nola Smith, a dance troupe member and a high school senior in Park Slope. "This woman did this to dozens of people. We knew we wouldn't be seeing our money by the time we needed it, so we were motivated to keep trying to raise money and so many people helped."



Dancewave Executive Director Diane Jacobowitz shows off the check for the stolen money that her lawyer recovered.
Photo by Ted Levin

TRYING TO TOW THE LINE

Foes threaten legit auto biz

BY JAKE PEARSON

DEATH threats. Firebombs. Muggings.

It's just another day at the office for Gil Velez, owner of Gil's Collision Services, a towing and auto repair shop in East New York.

"I'm a legitimate business out here," said Velez, 48, who this month, while repairing a rooftop air conditioner at his shop, discovered three bottles full of a mysterious liquid with rags stuffed in their necks.

"They were Molotov cocktails. . . They're trying to take away my livelihood," he said.

Fire marshals collected the bottles and are investigating the incident.

But for Velez, the apparent firebombing attempt by unknown persons is just one of the many dangers associated with his work in this part of Brooklyn, where scores of illegal tow trucks rush to accident scenes, and some angry thugs look for payback after their cars are removed from crime scenes.

"People out there are cracking heads, trying to get cars," said Velez, who has been in business for 13 years and runs a fleet of eight trucks. "I'm here [in East New York] for 48 years, and I'm not going anywhere."

By Velez's estimate, there



Gil Velez, owner of Gil's Collision Services in East New York, has gotten death threats from illegal towing businesses. Photo by James Monroe Adams 4th

are at least a dozen bootleg tow-truck companies in East New York roaming the streets listening to police scanners for a Code 53, the police signal for a car accident.

The bootleggers aren't registered with the Consumer Affairs Department, and usually don't have proper insurance or certification, but rush to accidents — and intimidate licensed tow truck drivers, such as those who work for Velez,

keeping them from hooking up the damaged cars.

"They're jealous of me," said Velez, who runs one of four legitimate tow companies in the area that are members of the NYPD Direct Accident Response Program (DARP), a database of legitimate tow truck companies police call after accidents.

"It gets me targeted, because if there's an illegal tow truck company there and I show up, by law he has to leave the scene."

But rarely do they leave quietly.

Years ago, a furious illegal tow driver dropped his truck's boom and rammed into Velez's truck at an accident scene, smashing it in the side before driving to Velez's office and firing gunshots at two more trucks.

Last week, in the middle of the night, vandals spray-painted "Die" and "We're gonna kill you" on the wall of his Liberty Ave. shop.

And one day last month, at 2:30 in the morning, one of Velez's drivers was assaulted and threatened after an angry car owner erupted as his ride was removed from a crime scene.

"It's crazy out here," said Velez, who has moved to Forest Hills, Queens, but still considers himself a Brooklyn guy. "They're trying to send me a message, but I'm not scared."

Teen dancers leap over obstacles on way to Scotland festival



Dancewave Company members practice their moves. The Park Slope teen troupe won a slot to perform at a dance festival in Scotland and had to raise \$40,000 to pay for the trip. Photo by Thomas Rowe

BY BEN CHAPMAN

THEY'VE GOT rhythm — and tenacity.

A teen dance troupe from Park Slope has overcome financial trouble and theft, and now is finally on its way to perform at a prestigious dance festival in Scotland.

"We paid for this with our blood and sweat," said Diane Jacobowitz, director of Dancewave Company, which has a studio on Fourth Ave. "We never gave up."

The 15-member modern dance company won a slot last October to perform at the prestigious Aberdeen International Youth Festival — the only American group invited to perform.

The only hitch was that the troupe had to pay its own way to the event, which runs from July 28 through Aug. 7 and is expected to attract 30,000 people.

Dancewave needed to raise \$40,000 to pay for the trip — no mean feat, especially since about half of the company's dancers come from low-income families.

"Some of our dancers have never left the country," said Jacobowitz. "These are kids who would not normally have a chance to see Scotland."

The plucky dancers asked family and friends for

help, held benefit performances and even pooled their baby-sitting earnings to fund the trip.

Then disaster hit: In January, a phony travel agent ripped them off for almost \$9,000.

"That was the most hardheaded thing imaginable," said Jacobowitz. "Things got very dark for a while."

But the dancers kept rehearsing and kept trying to raise money. In March, Nick Kotsonis, owner of Slope Health & Fitness, read about the troupe's difficulties in the Daily News and donated \$10,000 to help them pay for the trip.

A month later, Dancewave's fortunes improved yet again after the group recovered the stolen money with the help of Brooklyn attorney Jay Itkowitz, who took their case pro bono.

"That's when we knew we'd make it to Scotland," said Kelly Rodriguez, 16, of East New York. "We hung in there and made it through."

The troupe leaves a week from today, and its members are making final preparations, packing their bags and double-checking their passports.

With the dancers' goal so near, the struggles they faced getting to this point no longer seem so bad.

"All in all, it's been a positive lesson," said Nola Smith, 18, of Park Slope. "If you're trying to do something good in the world, people are going to help you out."

The Big Event



Chameleon
Dance
Edmonton,
from
Canada

He said: "It has just grown and grown, which shows a real resurgence in interest of young people in this kind of music. It has moved away from its Arran-jumper-wearing reputation towards funky ways of wearing your kilt and playing the electric fiddle. We have 45 players taking part this year from all over Scotland who will have five days of tuition with award-winning band Bodega." International talent, however, remains a huge mainstay of the festival, which got under way yesterday, and this year promises to be no different. Stewart said: "We have more groups and individuals coming this year than ever before, with young performers from as far afield as the Far East, Canada and Africa."

As well as a wide selection of classical, jazz, traditional and world music, there will be some outstanding dance

performances from groups such as Hungarian Dance Academy, who are young ballet dancers ready to go into their main professional company, and Zeynep Okcu Ballet School, the Turkish ballet company. Traditional dance will be on offer from Doina Folk Ensemble, of Romania, and Les Cavaliers du Desert, of Algeria, and New York teenage company Dancewave will be among the more contemporary dance offerings.

There will also be youth theatre from a host of groups including Israel's Children of the Heart, Kutaisi, from Georgia, and Mitchell School of Drama.

Altogether 1,000 young performers from 22 countries will take part in 100 performances across Aberdeen, and locations as far afield as Inverness, Dunfermline and Perth, by the time the festival



Westmorland Youth Orchestra, from Cumbria

draws to a close next Saturday. There will also be plenty of scope for visitors to Aberdeen city centre to get into the spirit of the festival for free this weekend.

Festival performers will join the spectacular Tartan Day parade down Union Street at 11am on Saturday and the Festival in the City programme will feature free performances

from some of the festival's best at stages throughout the city on Sunday.

■ For more information visit www.alyf.org

If you do anything this weekend...

MUSIC

Speyfest

The annual Speyfest music festival starts tonight in the Moray town of Fochabers. The main stage events at the festival site run from tonight until Sunday, at the playing fields on East Street.

Four days and nights of the best in traditional and contemporary Celtic music will see a mix of seated concerts and standing gigs, five hours of music at the Festival Night this Saturday, July 31, the music marathon that is the Survivors Ceilidh, a craft fair and the Festival Club.

The line-up features some of the biggest names from the world of Scottish music alongside international acts from the US and Canada, including Capercaille, Red Hot Chili Pipes, Treacherous Orchestra, Dainh, Sorn Maclean, Calum Stewart and Heikki Boungault, Tiller's Folly, Hayseed Dixie and The Wilders.

■ More information on the line-up, and on the various workshops taking place, can be found on the Speyfest website, www.speyfest.com



Hayseed Dixie

FESTIVAL

Gallowgate Festival

On Saturday, the annual Gallowgate Festival will be opened by Aberdeen's lord provost. Various stalls will be selling everything from home produce to plants and refreshments from 10am to 2pm. In addition, there will be a Flower Festival in the St Margaret of Scotland Church at the Gallowgate, and musical recitals will be performed during the day. Organ recitals will be given on Saturday morning by Ed Jones and George Chittenden.

Other entertainment will include the Diamond Vale Steel Orchestra from Trinidad as part of the Aberdeen International Youth Festival. The Aberdeen Tango Group will be giving a demonstration followed by a workshop for all interested.

In the evening, there will be a ceilidh in the church hall from 8pm-11pm, where a grand raffle will be drawn, as well as dancing to the music of Frank Thomson.

■ Further information can be obtained from the Very Rev Dr A.E. Nimmo, convener of the Gallowgate Festival, by calling (01224) 644969 or visiting www.stmargaretsgallowgate.org.uk

FOR CHILDREN

Aberdeen Art Gallery

Aberdeen Art Gallery has a line-up of fun workshops for children during July and August.

Children can step back in time with intriguing tales, fantastical Victorian stories told by the gallery's splendid storyteller, from 1pm-1.45pm and 2pm-2.45pm on August 3.

Those who have posture and like to pirouette can have fun in Victorian dance workshops on August 4 from 1pm-1.45pm for 5-7-year-olds and 2pm-2.45pm for 8-11-year-olds.

Today, a free workshop teaches you how to create a beautiful Victorian photograph album of photos of friends and family. This class is repeated on August 5, from 1pm-1.45pm and 2pm-2.45pm.

Finally, create your own magical Victorian photograph, complete with spooky ghosts or fanciful fairies in Photographic Phantasmagoria, tomorrow and on August 6, from 1pm-1.45pm and 2pm-2.45pm.

Activities are particularly suitable for families with primary school age children, except where age groups are specified. Booking for workshop places will open at 10am on the day of the workshop, but cannot be done in advance. You can book in person at the gallery or telephone (01224) 523700. Places are limited, so book in early.

Saturday 31 July 7.30pm

Scottish Youth Theatre: Foundation Course Performance

The Foundation Course offers young people aged 12 to 15 the chance to work with professionals to devise, rehearse and perform a new and exciting piece of theatre.

Monday 2 August 7.30pm

Hungarian Dance Academy and Zeynep Okcu Ballet School

Hungarian Dance Academy and Zeynep Okcu Ballet School (Turkey) perform a mixed bill of classical and contemporary ballet, folk and modern dance. Workshop 2 - 4pm.

Tuesday 3 August 7.30pm

Dancewave (USA) and Chameleon Dance (Canada)

Dancewave joins forces with Chameleon Dance to showcase their versatile talents through various dance styles from jazz and ethnic dance to hip-hop and martial arts.

Wednesday 4 August 7.30pm

Daraadji (Senegal)

An evening of African culture to feature musicians, percussionists, dancers, acrobats and actors from Senegal. Workshop 2 - 4 pm.

Thursday 5 & Friday 6 August 11am - 3.30pm

Summer Workshops for Kids 7 to 12

A series of fun filled workshops lead by Fiona Hope and Mina Rusk with storytelling and puppetry in the morning (11am-1pm) and pottery in the afternoon (2 - 3.30pm).

Monday 16 August 2-4pm

Pond dipping with Aileen Salway

Come as a family to join Aileen Salway in her search for beasties which lurk in the Wild Garden pond - wellies and gloves recommended!

NEWS ABERDEEN

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THOUSANDS EXPECTED TO TAKE PART IN TWO-DAY TARTAN CELEBRATIONS WITH PROCESSION IN CITY CENTRE

Festival will be colourful parade of culture and tradition

BY SHONA GOSSIP

A festival celebrating the culture, language and traditions of the north-east will get under way tomorrow.

Aberdeen International Youth Festival, floats, historical group Crann Tara, and special guest TV weatherman Sean Batty.

will headline at a concert at the city's Union Terrace. Scottish jazz singer Eileen Hunter will also be performing.

ing, and could be joined on stage by husband Steve Brookstein, who won the first series of the X Factor.

Ms Hunter will sing tracks from her new album, and to

house, where there will also be Doric readings and both ballads.

Events on Sunday will see performances by drummers, traditional musicians and dancers by members of the

Kenny Luke, events officer for Aberdeen City Council, said: "With every Tartan Day we try to grow the event, and I really think we have achieved that this year. It promises to be a fantastic day

erse range for all." tion, or to programme, aberdeenci

The two-day Tartan Festival will see thousands of people descend on Aberdeen for a range of activities, including historical re-enactments, an open-air concert and street theatre performances.

The main focal point of the event will be the Tartan Parade down Union Street, which begins at 11am.

Pipe bands will lead the procession, which includes guests taking part in the Ab-

Wallace's life will take place on Rosemount Viaduct from 12.30pm, which will include musical and theatrical performances. Afterwards, Pop Idol winner and television presenter Michelle McManus

It promises to be a fantastic day with a wide and diverse range of attractions

”

celebrate Tartan Day, will perform a Scottish tune her father wrote.

A country fair will run in Belmont Street throughout the day, while a family history fair will be on at the town

Aberdeen International Youth Festival, including Trinidad's Diamond Vale Steel Ensemble, French rock band Kaifa and the Canadian Coast String Fiddlers.

with a wide and diverse range of free attractions. For more information view the full programme please visit www.ty.gov.uk/tartanday

1000 youngsters in colourful Union Street parade

YOUNG performers from around the world descended on Aberdeen last week for the city's International Youth Festival.

Yesterday around 1000 participants donned their national costumes to take part in a parade down Union Street.

The event was also part of the city's Tartan Day celebrations.

So far the multi-arts festival has attracted youngsters from countries including Hungary, Russia, Trinidad, Norway, Canada, as well as a hip-hop group, Dance Movement, from Durban in South Africa.

However, American group Dancewave nearly didn't make it after a bogus travel agency stole their funds.

However, various organisations including Scottish companies Walkers Shortbread and Aberdeen Asset

Management stepped in to help with the group's travel costs.

Organisers are delighted with how the festival has gone so far.

Spokeswoman Nicole Hepburn, said, "There was a real carnival atmosphere in the city.

"The festival has been going great so far and we've got all of next week to go as well. There are definitely more nationalities represented this year than ever before."

One of the festival's highlights takes place today with the Festival in the City event from 1 - 5 pm across the city centre when there will be a range of entertainments including drumming, dance and street theatre from the young performers.

The festival, which is in its 38th year, began last Wednesday and will run until August 7.



■ With the participants dressed in national costumes, Union Street took on a carnival atmosphere.



WAVING HELLO: Chershym dance group.



PRIDE: Kids from Woodside march with their maypole.



RHYTHM: Left, Aisha Haraim and right, Hollie Smith.



HIGH ENERGY: Members of the Dance Wave group.



COLOURFUL: Left, Sofia Sanchez and, right, a member of the Dance Movements group.



HAVING FUN: Sarah Bransby, 4, with her little sister Amy, 1.



BIG SMILES: Emma Lawson having a great time at the festival.



FLYING THE FLAG:
Gavin Foster with
Corin McDermott, 2.



Pipers led top parade

Aberdeen's Tartan Day Festival

By Jennifer McKiernan

THE SOUND of pipers thrilled the thousands gathered for Aberdeen's Tartan Festival. Celebrations for the Granite city's Tartan Day ran alongside the Aberdeen International Youth Festival. Performers from across the world came to take part in the event, which included a parade and free musical and dramatic performances. The day was hailed by organisers as a huge success as the city centre was transformed by a carnival of colour. Youth festival performers and massed pipers made

their way down Union Street. A country fair showcased food, drink, arts and crafts, and actors retold the dramatic escape of a prisoner from Aberdeen's Tolbooth in 1638. A family and local history fair helped visitors trace their ancestry and the Wallace 700 marked the martyrdom of Wallace. And the Tartan on the Terrace concert showcased some of Scotland's finest performers, including former Pop Idol winner Michelle McManus, in the city's Union Terrace Gardens.



HISTORY: Crowds at the Wallace 700 celebration.



ALL THE GANG: Patrick McClenaghan, 12, left, with Eimear McClenaghan, 15, Karen Elliott and Jamie McClenaghan, 13.

To buy pictures call (01224) 338011 or visit www.eveningexpress.co.uk

Carnival offers fun workshops.

What's on at the

Aberdeen International Youth Festival

International Dance Evening
Hungarian Dance Academy
and Zeynep Okcu Ballet
School. Arts Centre, Aberdeen,
7.30pm tonight.

**Dancewave (USA) and
Chameleon Dance
(Filipino/Canadian)**
The Woodend Barn, Banchory,
7.30pm tonight.

Up Close and Musical
Sophie Cashell (piano).
The Sanctuary, Queen's Cross,
Aberdeen, 7.30pm tonight.

Theatre Double Bill
Kutaisi and Children of the
Heart. The Lemon Tree,
Aberdeen, 8pm tonight.

Norwegian Girls Choir
St Andrews Cathedral, King
Street, Aberdeen, 8pm
tonight.

Norwegian Girls Choir
Blairs Museum, Deeside,
7.30pm tomorrow.

**Daraadji (Senegal) and Les
Cavaliers du Desert (Algeria)**
The Woodend Barn, Banchory,
7.30pm tomorrow.

ARTS REVIEW

Dance gala a fitting tribute

BY RODDY PHILLIPS

LAST night's remarkable AIYF Dance Gala at HM Theatre was dedicated to the memory of Roy Thomson, who passed away at the end of last year.

Roy was an integral part of the festival and was its marketing director for more than 25 years. Among his many roles he helped the dance school grow into one of the most respected summer dance schools in the UK.

He would have been very impressed with last night's line-up of young dancers. Ten dance groups presented a slickly-paced programme that grew more thrilling by the minute.

Perhaps it was the juxtaposition of traditional pieces by the likes of the Doina Folk Ensemble, The Cheremshyna Ukrainian Dance Ensemble, Daraadji and the Hungarian Dance Academy with contemporary and classical works by the Zeynep Okcu Ballet School, Chameleon Dance Edmonton, Dance Movement and the AIYF Dance Lab that made such a mind-bending impact. Two companies, in particular, left an indelible impression – the Aberdeen Danscentre and the Dancewave from New York.

Tonight's concert at the Music Hall, A Little Chamber Music, promises to be another memorable AIYF event.

Aberdeen International
Youth Festival
2010
28 July - 7 August

6 Aug, 2010

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