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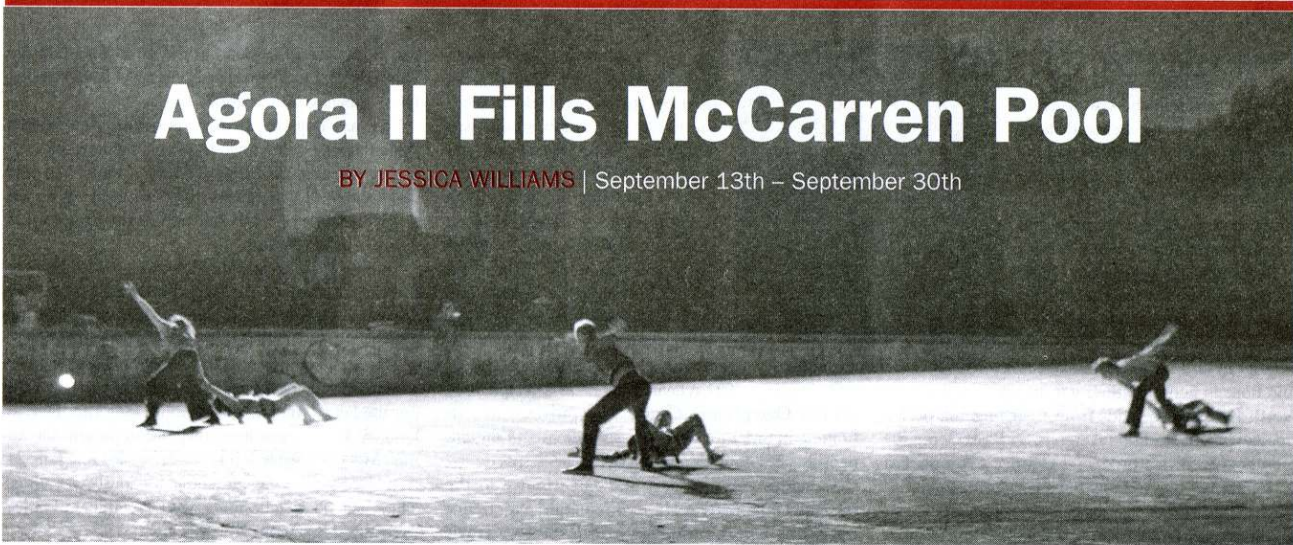
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Agora II Fills McCarren Pool

BY JESSICA WILLIAMS | September 13th – September 30th



Last year, Noemie LaFrance and non-profit organization, Sens Production presented “Agora” at McCarren Pool in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Closed since 1983, countless community attempts have been made to update and restore the historic relic. A new, ongoing attempt is in motion with the help of choreographer Noemie LaFrance. She admits that the planning process has not been a cohesive one, largely due to decentralized responsibility for the restoration. Roughly quoted at costing \$4 million to fully restore, ideas are being thrown around in community meetings. Last year, the parks department turned down a proposal Noemie wrote for an additional \$2 million; meanwhile, it is unclear what the city’s involvement will be in lending a helping hand. Community members complain that there is no obvious practical solution to raise the money.

Noemie on the other hand, believes, “action will always prevail over ideas. To actually implement an idea will always be a stronger statement. It’s hard to get everyone lined up on an idea, but when you’re doing it, it’s clear.” While envisioning the site as a future recreational and cultural facility, Noemie helped fundraise over \$250,000 to prepare the pool last August for a grand opening to public performances, including dance, film and music concerts.

Sticking to the plan at hand, Noemie melds vision with focus. “We don’t stop. The space could be a very interesting place- people lose interest and faith in America. I refuse to go with that. We need to have nice, interesting, recreational and cultural spaces.

We can have that if we want to. We have to make it happen, so that the space could be fixed much better. It could have so many more things.” To reach such a dream, she has been building awareness within and outside of the community of Greenpoint with her presentation of “Agora.” Noemie comments, “We’re really at the genesis, people are finally seeing it. Four thousand people showed up to the concerts. This space is going to get a lot of usage. People are waking up. That’s right; we can use it.”

Continuing her persistent efforts, this year, Noemie is back at it again, preparing for yet another site-specific dance performance at McCarren Pool. Last September, “Agora” introduced a market place and groups of individuals celebrating, playing, dancing and running. Just like its prequel, Agora II will engage audience members in visual dialogues with multiple directions of viewing. Only this time, the audience can experience the action from inside this vast, enormous structure. Set up as a game, spectator and performer will become one as the individual discovers a collective unity while working on aesthetic tasks in teams. The result will be an artistic effect, which is contradictory to the purpose of a game but the ultimate goal here is to question the mystery of the collective.

Einstein once said, “The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.” Typically, Noemie’s dances draw inspiration from the architecture in which her pieces are set. For Agora II, she will focus on the mystifying the vastness of McCarren Pool and juxta-

pose that around groups of bodies in the open space. During a recent phone interview, Noemie explained while cooking oysters, “Size is related to our bodies. The earth seems too big for us. You don’t even see the curve of the horizon. I’m interested in how the body looks ineffective in that space and looks like one cannot take that space over unless they are part of a group.”

A mélange of performers and local characters will morph in and out of the space, providing the gray area necessary for this dance happening. There will be “player” and “viewer” tickets on sale. The former will be sold for less than the latter. “There is irony in that and practicality.” Confirmed collaborators from the community working with Sens Production this year are Radiohole, The Breakscrew, Malcolm and the hula hoop entourage, Daria Fain, Celeste Hastings and the Butoh Rockers, Elizabeth Streb and Young Dance Collective.

Agora II opens on September 13th and runs through September 30th, Wednesday thru Saturday. McCarren Pool is located at Lorimer Street between Driggs and Bayard. For more information and tickets, visit www.sensproduction.org.

