

New Dance Styles Enter Glen Echo Park's Social Dance Roster and Celebrate Diverse Cultures

Cuban Dance, Ukrainian Hot Jazz, Hip Hop, and More!

GLEN ECHO, MD (January 15, 2024) – [Social Dance](#) is a cornerstone of Glen Echo Park, and the Park's dance program embodies much of what the Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture (the Partnership) stands for: accessible creativity, community well-being, and the celebration of diversity. Each week throughout the year, professional dance instructors lead beginner lessons followed by social dances in a wide range of styles – most with live music by renowned local and national bands. People of all ages and skill levels are invited to participate, no partner required.

Since the 1930s, the Spanish Ballroom at Glen Echo Park (and the Crystal Ballroom before that) has hosted dancers reveling in music and movement. The current social dance program – presented in the Spanish Ballroom as well as several other venues at the Park – took shape in the 1970s, and it remains one of the most popular in the DMV. Dance styles include blues, contra, swing, folk, waltz, tango, ballroom, zouk, balboa, and more.

This year in particular, the Partnership's Dance & Events Program Director, Emily Crews, is incredibly excited for dancers to visit the Park to **experience several new dance styles**. These styles are “not only new and exciting, but perfect for furthering our goal of increasing cultural diversity.”

First up, the Partnership's **Cuban Dance Socials** will kick off on **January 20** in the Ballroom Back Room. Co-presented with nonprofit **DC Casineros Dance Company**, attendees will have the opportunity to learn popular Cuban dances rooted in Afro-Cuban, Afrocaribbean, and French/English contra dances. The events will feature music by a leading DJ in the DC Cuban dance scene and a performance by members of the Dance Company. The Company's co-directors, Amanda Gill and Adrian Valdivia, have performed and taught at local venues and have experience with dance-as-therapy and presenting research on the development of Cuban music and dance in the 20th century. **Remaining dances in the series will take place in the Spanish Ballroom on March 30, June 15, and October 12.** (Tickets are \$15 General Admission.)

On **February 24**, the Partnership's new **Bumper Car Squares** series will light up the Bumper Car Pavilion with the delightful style that is Square Dance. The Partnership welcomes top-notch callers and musicians to the Park as it presents these special square dances, which differ from the regularly-offered contra dances: square dances are done in “squares” of eight people, whereas contra dances are performed in long lines. **Bumper Car Squares will continue on March 23, July 6, September 14, November 2, and December 7.** Dancers needn't worry about the cold; the outdoor Bumper Car Pavilion's overhead heaters will keep things warm during the cooler months. (Tickets are \$15 General Admission; \$5 Teens; free for 12 and under.)

Things are going to get hot at the Park this summer, in more ways than one! **On July 6, August 3, and September 7**, the Spanish Ballroom will serve as home to **Ukrainian Jazz Nights** featuring accomplished violinist **Nataly Merezhuk**. The public is invited to listen, dance, or both, as they enjoy the swing and hot



jazz styles that were integral to Ukrainian and Russian culture in the 1930s through the 1960s despite bans on western music imposed by Stalin in the former Soviet Union. Merezhuk has been researching the history of jazz in the USSR for years and is passionate about benefiting the Ukrainian community in the DMV through events that bring people of Ukrainian descent together, and educate those from other backgrounds. Crews summed it up well: “At a time of such conflict and strife in her country, how special to have Nataly Merezhuk bring a taste of Ukrainian culture to the Park for a celebratory series of swing dance events.” (Ticket prices, TBD)

In addition to these new series, Park visitors won't want to miss two one-time events coming up in May and June. On **May 11, Elements Dance Company** host a **Youth Hip Hop Event** in the Spanish Ballroom. The dance will feature interactive elements with children ages 5-17 in mind, though activities will be offered for the whole family to enjoy. “I'm beyond excited to bring a Hip Hop Cypher to the Spanish Ballroom,” Crews shares. “Hip Hop is centered in community and social engagement, which is my favorite thing about our social dance program.” As a pre-professional urban dance training program, Elements Dance Company knows how to create a fun, engaging, welcoming environment. (Ticket prices, TBD)

On **June 7, Raediant Movement** will bring ***There is Something about the Music***, a Caribbean-style dance party, to the Ballroom Back Room. The dance company's mission is “to highlight and teach similarities that connect Black dance across the diaspora,” and visitors can expect to learn choreography featuring dance forms such as Dancehall and Soca from the West Indies. The dances can be enjoyed alone or in a group and are accessible to children. A DJ will spin tunes from across the West Indies and Africa, creating an atmosphere of celebration and transporting dancers to another place and culture. (Ticket prices, TBD)

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About Glen Echo Park and the Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture

Glen Echo Park is a vibrant arts and cultural center presenting festivals, exhibitions, and dances, as well as children's theater, music programs, nature programs, and art classes to more than 300,000 visitors each year. The Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture, a nonprofit organization, oversees these and other activities, including preserving the historic structures in the Park. Glen Echo Park, part of the National Park Service, is located in Glen Echo, Maryland, six miles northwest of Georgetown along the scenic Potomac River palisades. For more information on Glen Echo Park, visit glenechopark.org or follow us on [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

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