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The new Black view

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East New York meets East Hampton

By **LINDA ARMSTRONG**
Special to the AmNews

"License to Dream" is a musical that shows that no matter where you grow up, if given the opportunity and the right to dream, anyone will aspire to achieve. Just because you grow up surrounded by poverty, drugs, graffiti and crime doesn't mean that you can't want better for yourself. It doesn't mean that you can't take a talent like the ability to dance and improve on it and dream of being a great dancer one day.

This is a lesson that six youth, are shown in "License to Dream." The characters — Shantelle, Aleem, Tyrone, Rashid, Nona and Taneisha — are from the East New York section of Brooklyn and are taken 80 miles away to a dance camp in East Hampton, Long Island. Candid video tape demonstrates the drastic differences in these environments, as one sees the beautiful homes of East Hampton and shop-lined streets compared to the graffiti covered, dilapidated build-



All Stars youth, Franceli Chapman (left) with Jeremy Smith from The Parsons Dance Company in *License to Dream*.
(Photo Ron Glassman)



Young performers from the All Stars Project and members of The Parsons Dance Company in *License to Dream* at the All Stars Project on West 42nd Street.

(Photo Ron Glassman)

ings and housing projects in East New York.

These young people come in contact with six dance instructors and, at first, want to show that they don't need to be taught to dance — they have rhythm, soul and moves. They come in combative but are slowly won over by the instructors, who ask them have they ever dreamed of flying and explain that dancing is the closest thing to flying. As two weeks pass at the camp, these young people learn to soar with their bodies and their minds.

This production brings together the talents of six youth from the All Stars Talent Show Network — Peter Graham, Rodnel Janvier, Tianna Brown, Shakimah White, Aaron Lewis, and Franceli Chapman — along with six dancers from The Parsons Dance Company. "License to Dream" was conceived, written and di-

rected by Fred Newman, who also wrote the lyrics, and has choreography by David Parsons, with music by David Truskinoff.

Though the show moves quickly, lasting less than an hour, the audience is allowed to dramatically see how the students drop their defensive behavior and allow themselves to dream and learn how to dance and move gracefully. There is definitely an inspiring message in this work. They also learn that dancing means hard work. This musical is the first project of the All Stars Project's Artists Committee, chaired by former American Ballet Theatre prima ballerina, Susan Jaffe.

"License to Dream" is playing a limited number of performances June 16-19 at the All Stars Project, located at 543 W. 42nd St. (between 10th and 11th avenues). Tickets are \$20/30 and can be ordered by calling (212) 941-1234.