

Images Available Upon Request

Contact: Martha Gellens 718.549.3200 x232 or
marthag@wavehill.org

WAVE HILL COMMISSIONS CHOREOGRAPHER MERIÁN SOTO FOR ONE-YEAR RESIDENCY

Soto returns to the Bronx, her artistic home, to develop a site-specific temporal work

Bronx, NY, July 13, 2011— Wave Hill, a 28-acre public garden and cultural center overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades, has commissioned award-winning choreographer **Merián Soto** to return to the Bronx, her artistic home, to develop a site-specific project during a one-year residency. *The first Branch Dances at Wave Hill performance takes place Saturday, October 29, 2011 at 3PM. Performances are free with admission to the grounds.* Soto's project is Wave Hill's 2011–2012 *generated@wavehill* commission, a program that provides artists the opportunity to create temporal work for the grounds. Over the next 12 months, Soto will develop and perform *Branch Dances at Wave Hill*. This year-long work consists of four outdoor performances, one each season, beginning fall 2011. This new project borrows from the seasonal structure of Soto's award-winning, *One Year Wissahickon Park Project* presented in Wissahickon Valley Park, a wooded section of Philadelphia's famed Fairmount Park.

Soto uses both choreographed and improvised movement to transform everyday life experience, memory and history into innovative works that create a heightened awareness of emotion, expression and consciousness. *Branch Dances at Wave Hill* performances are slow and meditative, yet powerfully communicative. Soto works with her team of five dancers—Beau Hancock, Shavon Norris, Jumatatu Poe, Olive Prince and Marion Ramirez—and percussionist Robert (Tigger) Benford, to connect body, mind, place and elements to stillness. Soto will select locations that respond to seasonal aspects of the landscape, taking advantage of Wave Hill's brilliant foliage, sweeping vistas and sculptural trees. Audiences are invited to slow down and enter a state of heightened receptivity to nature. Visitors who attend the whole series will gain an enhanced experience of seasonal change, as well as a deeper understanding of body and self as part of nature.

Soto's work dovetails with Wave Hill's mission to explore human connections to the natural world through the arts, and furthers its rich history in presenting adventurous, mission-related outdoor performances. Soto will also take part in Wave Hill's 2011-2012 Winter Workspace Program to further develop the performance series, as well as to plan for a future component, a video installation of the project to be presented at Wave Hill and beyond.

About Merián Soto

Merián Soto, who considers her artistic life rooted in the Bronx, is one of the Founding Artistic Directors of Pepatían, the Bronx-based, multi-disciplinary Latino arts organization. In that capacity, during the 1980's and 1990's she developed, curated and produced numerous projects featuring new works by emerging Latino dance and performance artists. Soto's work has been presented across the United States and internationally since the mid 1980's. In 2000, she was the recipient of the New York Dance and Performance Award, commonly known as the Bessie Award. Soto is an Associate Professor and MFA Coordinator of the Department of Dance at the Esther Boyer College of Music and Dance at Temple University. Soto is a PennPAT Roster Artist. For more information visit www.meriansoto.com.

MORE/

History of Branch Dances

Since 2005, Soto has created dozens of park performances and branch dances for the stage, including the critically acclaimed *What is Love?* (commissioned by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts), *Three Branch Songs* (a duet with pianist Elio Villafranca), as well as *States of Gravity & Light* (a series of dances performed within a projected environment). Soto's award-winning *One Year Wissahickon Park Project* was performed in Philadelphia, closing in June 2008. This critically acclaimed creative research project investigated correspondences between movement, the elements, physical experience, alignment and balance, consciousness and performance. Soto and her troupe completed 16 performances, four per season, in various weather conditions, including temperatures ranging from 20 to 98 degrees, rain, snow, sleet, and high winds. This critically-acclaimed creative research project shaped a number of performance experiences in nature in order to experience their evolution over time, as impacted by seasonal temperature and weather variations. In 2009, Soto's *Postcards From the Woods* premiered at the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival. With this work, Soto expanded branch dancing into a performance and installation that created an immersion experience for the audience, incorporating a surround video-soundscape of images and sound from the Wissahickon Woods.

Tentative Schedule of Performances

Fall: Saturday, October 29, 2011, 3PM
Winter: Saturday, January 7, 2012, 3:30PM
Spring: Sunday, April 22, 2012
Summer: Saturday, June 23, 2012

Media sponsorship of this program is provided by BronxNet, which provides local television viewing for the people of the Bronx, by the people of the Bronx.

Branch Dances is partially supported by a grant from Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour, a program developed and funded by The Heinz Endowments; the William Penn Foundation; the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency; and The Pew Charitable Trusts; and administered by Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. Matching funds have been provided by The Harkness Foundation for Dance and The Stephen and Cathy Weinroth Charitable Trust. This project is supported with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, celebrating 50 years of building strong, creative communities in New York State's 62 counties. Sustaining support for Wave Hill is provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Wave Hill	675 West 252nd St Bronx, NY 10471	718.549.3200	www.wavehill.org
HOURS	Open all year, Tuesday–Sunday and many major holidays: 9AM–5:30pm. <i>Closes 4:30pm, October 15–April 14</i>		
ADMISSION	\$8 adults, \$4 students and seniors 65+, \$2 children 6–18. <i>Free Tuesday, Saturday morning until noon.</i> <i>Free to Members and children under 6.</i>		

DIRECTIONS–Getting here is easy. Located only 30 minutes from midtown Manhattan, Wave Hill's free shuttle van transports you to and from our front gate and Metro-North's Riverdale station, and the end of the #1 subway line. Limited onsite parking is available for \$8 per vehicle. Free off-site parking nearby with continuous, complimentary shuttle service to and from our front gate. Directions and shuttle schedule at www.wavehill.org.



Target Free Days

Target sponsors free Tuesday and Saturday morning admission to Wave Hill, providing public access to the arts in our community.