



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 25, 2018

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Waterfront Alliance Announces “Canal to Coast,” a Summer Program Series Celebrating the Bicentennial of the Erie Canal

Canal to Coast programming will commence on July 14, City of Water Day

New York, NY—On July 14, 2018, [City of Water Day](#), the [Waterfront Alliance](#) will kick off **Canal to Coast**, a summer series of programs including dance, music, and theater performances and boat tours in and around New York Harbor that celebrate the bicentennial of the Erie Canal.

With the opening of the Erie Canal 200 years ago, one unbroken, navigable waterway stretched from Buffalo, New York, on Lake Erie, to Albany, where the 363-mile man-made canal met the mighty Hudson River and offered a link to New York City and its busy harbor. From that point on, as new markets opened up along the route and beyond in the Midwest, New York City’s status as the country’s most important port city was undisputed.

Made possible by the [New York State Council on the Arts](#) with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, the Waterfront Alliance’s summer series of **Canal to Coast** programs will weave together maritime arts and heritage with economic history, and will bring the New York State Canal Corporation’s educational activities to New York Harbor. On July 14, at the City of Water Day festival hub at Lower Manhattan’s Seaport District, the Canal Corp. will host an interactive booth where festival goers can learn about the development and operations of New York State’s canals, as well as recreation opportunities on these inland waters.

City of Water Day is the region’s largest and most popular harbor festival, organized by the Waterfront Alliance every year since 2008 to get people to, on, and in the water. The 2018 festival hub—presented by [The Howard Hughes Corporation](#)—will come alive at the piers and cobblestones of the historic Seaport District, while dozens of community groups and organizations will host their own City of Water Day *In Your Neighborhood* events in all five boroughs, Yonkers, and New Jersey. For details, please visit the [City of Water Day website](#).

After City of Water Day, **Canal to Coast** programming will continue in August with dance, music, theater, and even a participatory operetta, all taking place aboard the 104-year-old railroad barge *Lehigh Valley No. 79* of the [Waterfront Museum](#), docked in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Canal to Coast boat tours aboard [New York Water Taxi](#) will highlight the origins of Red Hook’s Erie Basin as the destination for Erie Canal barge traffic and the basin’s current role as a resource for today’s maritime industry. There will be nominal charges for performances and tours; Canal to Coast reservation information will be forthcoming on the Waterfront Alliance website.

"The New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) is thrilled to support the Waterfront Alliance's exciting Canal to Coast summer arts programming," said **Mara Manus, executive director of NYSCA**. "Celebrating the bicentennial of the Erie Canal with vibrant dance, theater, and musical performances, along with educational boat tours, blends the rich history of our waterways with the importance of the arts for local communities across New York to thrive and flourish."

"We at the Waterfront Museum are excited to host Canal to Coast performances," said **David Sharps, Waterfront Museum founder and president**. "The *Lehigh Valley No. 79* is an authentic floating artifact from a time when thousands of barges and tugs crisscrossed the local waterways. The Canal to Coast programs will help us appreciate how essential this era was to the evolution of the Port of New York."

"New York City became a world capital because of its magnificent harbor and access to the sea. Two hundred years ago, tall-masted sailing ships from around the world jostled each other at South Street Seaport's teeming docks and barges laden with goods going to and from the Erie Canal crowded the Hudson and East Rivers," said **Roland Lewis, president and CEO of the Waterfront Alliance**. "Today, our regional economy hums along, inextricably tied to marine commerce, from the neo-Panamax container ships that squeeze under the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge to the recently reactivated South Brooklyn Marine Terminal shipping hub. The Waterfront Alliance produces programs like Canal to Coast and City of Water Day to salute and celebrate our maritime heritage."

Canal to Coast program highlights (in formation)

Saturday, July 14

City of Water Day Canal to Coast Kick-Off (10am-4pm)

At the City of Water Day festival hub in the Seaport District, the New York State Canal Corporation offers information, maps, and activities about the Erie Canal and its bicentennial.

Thursdays, August 2, 16, 30

Canal to Coast Boat Tours (6:30pm-8:30pm)

Take to the water to learn about the origins of Brooklyn's Erie Basin as the Erie Canal's ultimate destination, and its current role as a vital resource for maritime industry.

Friday, August 3

Lockstep (7pm)

Lock Step is a performance by the Artichoke Dancy Company that reflects movement in and along the Erie Canal's route and through its lock system. The work begins on Pier 44, adjacent to the Waterfront Museum, travels to the Waterfront Garden Park and returns to the pier, leading audiences the barge for part two of the evening.

Artists on the Erie (8:15pm)

What's it like to navigate the Erie Canal today? In this panel discussion. Artist Marie Lorenz and musician Christopher Bell will discuss the experience of transiting the canal today and how that experience has impacted their work.

Sunday, August 5

Oh! That Low Bridge! (7pm)

Singer, composer, and folklorist George Ward brings the Erie Canal's heyday to life through story and song.

Friday, August 24

15 Miles on the Erie Canal: A Participatory Fun Folk Operetta (7pm)

Sondra and John Bromka have been entertaining and educating audiences of all ages through folk and historical music for more than 30 years. Their family-friendly folk operetta presents the history of the Erie Canal in a performance form popular in the canal's most productive years. Featured instruments include hammer dulcimer, banjo, fiddle, squeezebox, and hurdy-gurdy.

Saturday, August 25

Five Views of the Erie Canal (8pm)

Combining music, dance, and spoken word, this performance paints a multi-faceted portrait of the Erie Canal, its geography, social impact, engineering, labor issues, and more.

Sunday, August 26

Noah's Arc (7pm)

A staged reading of a new play Joanie Fritz Zosike about Mordecai Manuel Noah, the 19th-century visionary, lawyer, and playwright, who worked to create a sanctuary homeland for Jews on an island off Buffalo

The [Waterfront Alliance](#) works to protect, transform, and revitalize our harbor and waterfront.

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