

For Immediate Release
September 30, 2004

Expanded Annual Halloween on Haunted Walk Offers More Chills and Thrills to Garden Visitors

Sunday, October 31, 2–4 p.m.

A New York City holiday tradition continues this Halloween with new surprises and a new venue as outlandish characters of myth and imagination return to the Bronx on October 31, 2004, at The New York Botanical Garden, for the 12th annual *Halloween on Haunted Walk*. Grisly ghosts, ghoulish goblins, comically grotesque giants, tap-dancing skeletons, and other creatures of fantasy will once again delight visitors. This year, the popular event will be staged amid the Benenson Ornamental Conifers, 15 picturesque acres which will re-open to the public on Saturday, October 30, near the Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden in the southernmost section of the Garden. Entry to *Halloween on Haunted Walk* is \$2 (which includes entry to the Everett Children's Adventure Garden), plus Garden admission.

Halloween on Haunted Walk entertains and enchants through the magic of its creator, legendary New York City designer of masks and puppets Ralph Lee. His imaginative works of art capture a sense of spectacle and mythology from various cultures around the world. The two-hour event will feature costumed actors and imaginative set-pieces, including ten new tableaux. Guests will see new murky creatures amid the Metasequoia trees at the beginning of the walk, a choreographed scene at the largest lawn space in the conifer site, a "Spirit Bird" character at one of the rock outcrops, as well as Dragons and other never before seen figures.

Another original creation this year will be a tableau showing characters representing the Four Seasons, hosted by the Roman god of mythology, Jupiter. "They were just my take on what the Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter mean to me," explained Ralph Lee. "They have the colors and shapes that those particular seasons evoke. In the clothing and their masks, it reflects the nature of the season. Winter has a very pinched, icily kind of feeling about it, and Autumn is bloated and besotted. Summer is very relaxed and sunny and Spring is colorful and flowery."

The lavishly costumed, often larger-than-life figures will spellbind children and adults of all ages, amid one of New York City's most beautiful autumn garden settings. "A lot of my characters have a specific relation to nature, so they fit in with the landscape," Ralph Lee continued, talking about the new location of the event amid the Garden's Benenson Ornamental Conifers. "They really feel right at home at The New York Botanical Garden. The new location is great because it does have so many spaces that are inviting to each kind of figure I've created. Actually there are a couple of places in the new setting where I'm hoping to respond directly to some of the plants that are growing there. There are trees, some of the conifers, that have such interesting shapes, like the Snake Branch tree and I think they'll complement my characters and tableaux very well."

In addition to the new creations, visitors who have experienced the fun of Halloween on Haunted Walk in years past can enjoy seeing Lee's familiar characters, like the Tap-dancing Skeletons, the Crows, and Fishwives Tea Party, in their fresh new setting.

Halloween on Haunted Walk, page 2


Ralph Lee's *Haunted Walk* at the Garden is considered by many theater-arts aficionados and wide-eyed children as one of the top three Halloween attractions in New York City. Two others that he also masterminded are the Halloween Extravaganza and Procession of Ghouls at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, where he is Ghoul Master; and the Village Halloween Parade of New York City, which he founded in 1974 and directed for 12 years, nurturing it from a small Greenwich Village event into a major award-winning festival.

Visitors strolling through the Garden's *Halloween on Haunted Walk* will encounter a delightful cast of Lee's creatures lurking behind trees, peeping above rocks, creeping through the bushes, and romping along pathways, against a colorful backdrop of fall foliage and green conifers accented by enormous puppets hanging from trees. One may catch a glimpse of demons with capes frolicking across a hillock, or delight in chatting with a huge walking pumpkin or in sitting on a bench next to a bespectacled "giant elderly gentleman."

Works by Ralph Lee have appeared in settings as diverse as the New York City Opera, The Joffrey Ballet, Living Theatre, television's *Saturday Night Live*, and Central Park on New Year's Eve. The Mettawee River Theatre Company, which he runs with his wife, Casey Compton, performs annually during the summer in parks and open spaces in upstate New York from its base in Salem, home of *Halloween on Haunted Walk* characters between Garden spookings.

Families can enjoy Ralph Lee's creative vision in the Bronx this Halloween. "I continue to be interested in the challenge of creating something that entertains and excites people of all ages," he concludes. "I really like the way the community turns out for Halloween on Haunted Walk."

The New York Botanical Garden invites visitors to wear a costume and join the fun. Entry to *Halloween on Haunted Walk* is \$2, plus Garden admission. Call 718.817.8700 or visit www.nybg.org for more information.

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The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road in the Bronx. The Garden is open year-round, Tuesday-Sunday and on Monday holidays, from 10 a.m. -6 p.m. April-October, and 10 a.m.-5p.m. November-March. The best way to enjoy the Garden is with the *Combination Ticket* that includes grounds admission, the Conservatory, Rock Garden, Native Plant Garden, Tram Tour, and Everett Children's Adventure Garden. Grounds admission is free to everyone all day Wednesdays and on Saturdays from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. For information, call (718) 817-8700.

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Photos available