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DEDICTION OF MUSIC ISLAND AND THE ESPLANADE
First phase of the historic landscape restoration of Olmsted and Vaux’s original design for Prospect Park, led by $10 million grant from the Leon Levy Foundation

Brooklyn, NY – The Prospect Park Alliance hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony on Friday, October 19, 2012 to mark the dedication of Chaim Baier Music Island & the Shelby White and Leon Levy Esplanade at Lakeside. The event celebrated the restoration of the most formal area of the Park, as designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in 1867.

The original Olmsted and Vaux landscape was dismantled in 1960 for the construction of the former Wollman Rink. The recreation of Music Island and the Esplanade is the first phase of a restoration project that will include, in the second phase, a new 25,000-square-foot facility and two skating rinks to be completed in late fall 2013. The first phase was funded principally by a $10 million grant from the Leon Levy Foundation, with additional funding from the Environmental Protection Fund of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the New York State Dormitory Authority, and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Music Island is being named in honor of Ms. White’s father, Chaim Baier, and the Esplanade is in honor of Ms. White and her late husband, Mr. Leon Levy.

“The revitalization of Prospect Park is a remarkable example of the impact that concerned citizens and public-private partnerships can have on our city’s parks,” said Mayor Michael Bloomberg. “The historic restoration of Music Island and the Esplanade brings the original vision of Olmsted and Vaux back to this part of the Park for the first time in more than fifty years. This dedication marks the culmination of the incredible work of a talented creative team, made possible by the generosity of Shelby White and the Leon Levy Foundation and the New York State Environmental Protection Fund.”

“Today’s event honors both the original designers of Prospect Park, Olmsted and Vaux, as well as one of its greatest supporters of today, Shelby White,” said NYC Parks Commissioner Veronica M. White. “Under the leadership of the Prospect Park Alliance, we’ve been able to restore the original plans for this section of the park, while also enhancing the area’s natural features. This iconic and historic park has never looked better.”

“Prospect Park is an urban emerald—a crown jewel—in our city’s park system, and I am thrilled that Music Island and the Esplanade have been restored to their original glory. The northern shoreline of Prospect Park Lake will be an oasis and gathering place for not only local residents, but visitors from around the world,” said Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz. “Bravo
to Shelby White, the Leon Levy Foundation, and all of their public and private partners for preserving, restoring and improving Prospect Park to reflect the timeless designs of Olmsted and Vaux.”

“The completion of this restoration marks a historic moment in Prospect Park, and is a crowning achievement for the Prospect Park Alliance working in partnership with the City of New York Parks Department,” said Albert Garner, Chair of the Prospect Park Alliance Board of Directors. “We are very grateful to Shelby White and the Leon Levy foundation for making it possible to bring the beauty and elegance of the Esplanade and Music Island back to Brooklyn for all to enjoy.”

Emily Lloyd, President of Prospect Park Alliance, said, “The completion of the Chaim Baier Music Island and the Shelby White and Leon Levy Esplanade marks a transformative milestone in the restoration of Prospect Park. For the first time in over fifty years, Prospect Park will have the gathering spot of extraordinary beauty that was central to Olmsted and Vaux’s vision for the Park as both a great gathering place and a place to reconnect with nature. Countless Park visitors will benefit from Shelby’s vision and the Leon Levy Foundation’s generosity for decades to come.”

Shelby White, founding trustee of the Leon Levy Foundation, said, “I grew up a block away from the park and played there all the time. As a child I took Prospect Park’s beauty for granted; as an adult I understood the need to restore the original Olmsted and Vaux design. Now I can say that Prospect Park’s lakesides has never looked better.”

With its shoreline and scenic views, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux conceived of Music Island, the Esplanade and the Concert Grove as a central space for Brooklyn residents to come together, whether for musical concerts or ice skating on the Lake. Using Olmsted and Vaux’s plans for Prospect Park and through extensive photographic research and analysis, Music Island and the Esplanade have been restored to their original design. Music Island has been rebuilt in five acres of re-excavated Lake. The granite walls along the formal part of the esplanade have been reconstructed as per their original design and the soft edge of the extended esplanade has been restored with boulders and native trees, shrubs and aquatic plants. The radial path system and terrace in the Lower Concert Grove have also been re-established. The completion of Music Island and the Esplanade marks a significant milestone in the Alliance’s ongoing restoration of Prospect Park and its entire 60-acre watercourse.

Music Island, the Esplanade and Concert Grove are an integral part of the $74 million, 26-acre Lakeside project to restore the southeast area of the Park to its original glory. Lakeside will also replace the old Wollman ice skating rink with a 25,000-square-foot facility designed by Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects. The new sustainable facility has green roofs and is designed to seamlessly blend into the surrounding parkland. It will be LEED Silver certified and will feature both indoor and outdoor space with two rinks (30,000-square-feet in total skating surface). The rinks will host ice skating and hockey in the fall and winter and roller skating and a water playground in the spring and summer. By constructing this new year-round facility on the site of the parking lot for the old Wollman Rink, five acres are being added to the lake as well as three
acres of green space for active public use. It is anticipated that Lakeside will accommodate three times the number of visitors as compared to the former rink.

Lakeside is a project of the Prospect Park Alliance, in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation and the New York City Economic Development Corporation. Prospect Park Alliance landscape architect, Christian Zimmerman, FASLA, and the staff of the Alliance’s Design and Construction office provided the design for Music Island and the Esplanade, and are working with Tod Williams and Billie Tsien as the landscape architects for the entire Lakeside design. They also provided the landscape design for the restoration of the original Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux design throughout Prospect Park. For project updates please visit our website: www.prospectpark.org/lakeside.

About the Leon Levy Foundation
The Leon Levy Foundation, founded in 2004, is a private, not-for-profit foundation created from the estate of Leon Levy, an investor with a longstanding commitment to philanthropy. The Foundation’s overarching goal is to support scholarship at the highest level, ultimately advancing knowledge and improving the lives of individuals and society at large.

For more information on Prospect Park events, programs, membership and volunteering at the Park, call the Park Hotline at (718) 965-8999 or visit www.prospectpark.org.
Dial 311 for all Parks & Recreation information

In partnership with the City of New York and the community, the Prospect Park Alliance restores, develops, and operates Prospect Park for the enjoyment of all by caring for the natural environment, preserving historic design, and serving the public through facilities and programs. Prospect Park’s 585 acres of meadows, waterfalls, forest, lakes, and athletic facilities comprise a masterwork of urban green space.

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