

# NEW YORK

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

DECEMBER 20-27, 2010

REASONS

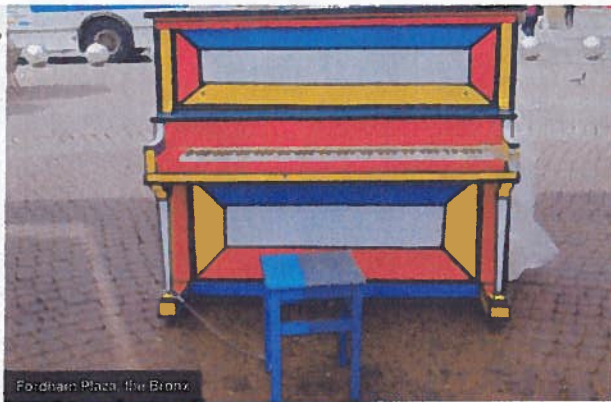
TO

LOVE

NEW

YORK

RIGHT  
NOW  
6th Edition



Fordham Plaza, the Bronx



Times Square



Grand Concourse, the Bronx



Tompkins Square Park



Lincoln Center



Battery Park



Gantry Plaza State Park, Long Island City



Harlem Art Park

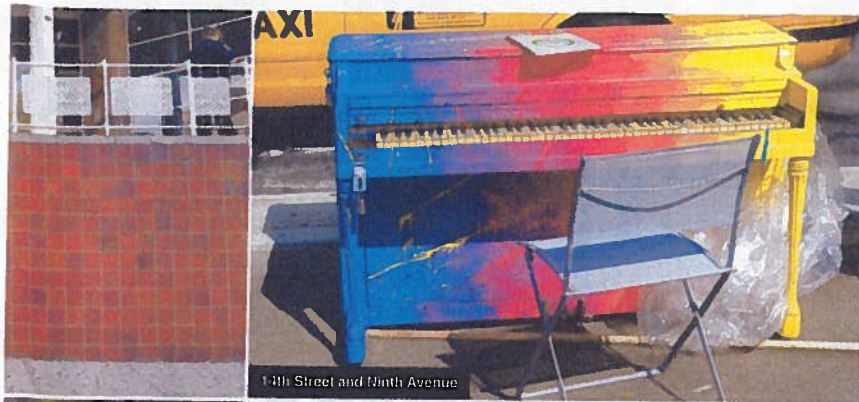


Astor Place

# #27

Because

# Last Summer, 60 Pianos Magically Appeared.



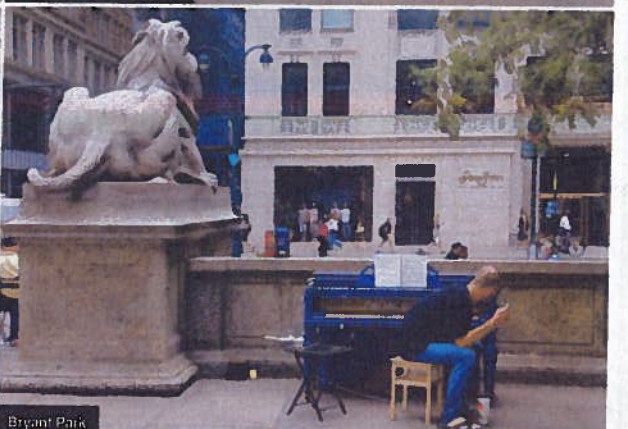
14th Street and Ninth Avenue



Seward Park, Chinatown



Brooklyn Bridge Park, Brooklyn



Bryant Park



St. Nicholas Park, Harlem



McCarran Park, Williamsburg

FROM THE GRAND CONCOURSE in the Bronx to the Staten Island Ferry Terminal, from the Coney Island boardwalk to the Jackson Heights post office came the rumbling of the bass and the plaintive trilling of the melodies. The notes were not always in perfect time or perfectly tuned; they issued from battered old instruments painted in loud colors. But they expressed, with perfect fidelity, a city's collective delight at the start of summer.

Sixty pianos appeared throughout the city on June 21, emblazoned with an invitation: **PLAY ME, I'M YOURS**. An enterprising nonprofit called Sing for Hope conceived of the plan (taking its cue from London but vastly enlarging the scale); a wealthy benefactor covered all

the costs; an army of volunteers toiled to get the pianos ready for the public. Every piano had a designated caretaker, responsible for locking it up at night and draping it in a protective tarpaulin when it rained. And over the course of the next two weeks, the people in parks and piers and sidewalks and train stations did the rest. Opera singers gave impromptu concerts. Youthful prodigies played Mozart in front of Lincoln Center. Show tunes and pop songs burst forth from street corners everywhere. Amazingly, only one case of deliberate vandalism was reported, contrary to the expectations of Sing for Hope and, well, everyone else. Instead, the pianos served as occasion and backdrop for the giddy little comedies that can sometimes break out in public spaces.

Aron Magner, a keyboardist with the Philadelphia-based jam band the Disco Biscuits, told his girlfriend, Angelika Berman, to meet him at the public piano in the middle of Herald Square on June 24. "I sat down and started playing, and segued into 'You Are the Sunshine of My Life' and started singing it to her." A large crowd had gathered. "I immediately started embarrassing her. I just kept singing, and she kept blushing." At the end of it, as the crowd broke into applause, Angelika told him, "All right, that's really sweet, baby, but we're in a rush. We need to go." But Magner had one more thing with which to detain her.

"That's when I got on my knees and asked her to marry me. She immediately said yes," he told me on the phone, from his honeymoon in Thailand. **WESLEY YANG**