

*...to continue to make Murray Hill a highly desirable place to live, work and visit.*

## FACES OF MURRAY HILL

### The Tehrani Family: A Surgeon from Iran and a Singer from Canada

#### Find a Home on East 35th Street

*By Ravelle Brickman*

Born into a family of professionals in the former Persia, Kevin Tehrani grew up in a world of relative comfort. His father worked for an American company and all the children studied English.

Everything changed with the revolution. In the new Iran, Jewish boys, like Kevin, were in mortal danger. Fearing that he would be drafted, the family arranged his escape. Barely 14, he and two other boys fled to Afghanistan, then were smuggled across the desert on camels. In Pakistan they were granted asylum. Kevin was flown to Vienna a few months later and the family ultimately emigrated to the U.S.

Determined to be a doctor, Kevin entered Queens College at 16, then received his medical degree at SUNY Downstate and completed a fellowship in plastic surgery at the University of Kansas. Following service in the U.S. Naval Reserve he made several trips to underdeveloped countries to perform reconstructive surgery on children.

"I wanted to give something back to the country that had given me so much," he said, still grateful for the success he has found in the U.S. He is now chief of his division at SUNY Downstate and has private offices on Park Avenue and in Great Neck.

For Leah Moss, the move to New York at 18 was a lot easier.

Growing up in Canada, Leah became a professional singer at the age of nine, when she joined the Toronto Children's Choir.

"Singing changed my life," she said. At 13, she made her debut at Carnegie Hall. Five years later, she moved to New York to study at Julliard and the Mannes School of Music, simultaneously performing with the Grand Opera of New York, the Folkesbiene Theater and other musical companies.

Meeting Kevin was a turning point in her life. It was "love at first sight." They were married in 2004 and moved to Murray Hill five years later. Here they purchased three floors of a townhouse on 35th Street and enrolled their children in local schools.

Although brought up in Toronto's Jewish community, Leah was not particularly religious until she joined Birthright, a not-for-profit organization that sponsors trips to Israel for young people of Jewish descent. She went to Israel in 2003, where she experienced a profound spiritual awakening. On returning to the U.S., she began performing benefits for Jewish groups.

Through her work for one such group, she met Rabbi Joshua Plaut. When Rabbi Plaut was appointed head of Metropolitan Synagogue, he turned immediately to Leah Tehrani for cantorial assistance.



*Kevin and Leah Tehrani on Mother's Day, 2011, with Jude (left) and Kaelin.*

*Photo: Ziba Photography*

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## There's More to Murray Hill....

*Editor's note: The Murray Hill Neighborhood Association has retained Mr. Robins to prepare the National Register nomination for an expanded Murray Hill Historic District.*

The Murray Hill National Register Historic District is about to get larger, and will soon include most of the neighborhood within its long-accepted boundaries—East 34th to East 40th Street, Madison Avenue to Third Avenue. Additions range from 1860s row houses and stables to apartment buildings that have recently turned 50 years old, the minimum age required by the National Register.

Houses include speculative rows such as Nos. 149 to 157 East 37th Street (John G. Prague, 1872–73), and individual townhouses such as 31 East 38th Street (William P. Easterbrook, 1869). Unusually expensive for

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*By Anthony W. Robins*

“It was like worlds colliding,” she said. “To combine my singing and my religious beliefs in a single job — and to have it right across the street from our house and next door to my daughter’s nursery school — was amazing.”



Outside PS 116: Jude Tehrani, age 6, is entering first grade. Kaelin, age 4, will start kindergarten next year.

Photo: Sami Steigmann

At Metropolitan Synagogue, which shares space with the Community Church of New York on East 35th Street, her title is “artistic director.” As such, she is following in the footsteps of Leonard Bernstein, who held the same job more than 50 years ago. Her goal, bowing to the Maestro, is to restore the synagogue to its once storied role as a cultural center for the neighborhood. 



From proscenium to pulpit: Leah Terhani is the new artistic director of Murray Hill’s synagogue.

Photo: Sami Steigmann

Ravelle Brickman is a writer and marketing consultant who teaches at NYU.

## A Memorable Tour of Our Saviour (Wine Included)

By Pauline Brooks

The handsome building with the tower and gray stone facing on Park Avenue and 38th Street—namely, the Church of Our Saviour—was the location of a very special event on May 9. MHNA members and friends gathered there for a tour given by the pastor, Father George Rutler.

The construction of the church was completed in 1959 and was built not only to fill a utilitarian need but to create a showpiece on Park Avenue. The interior space is relatively simple, but encompasses many lovely features, including a triumphal arch, beautiful stained glass windows, intricate stone flooring and a high gilt cassette ceiling (further information can be found on the church’s website). Father George was an especially gracious and witty host and provided inside information about the church’s history and artifacts.

After the tour, everyone was invited to a reception on Father George’s private terrace on the fifth floor. The weather had been alarmingly unstable all day, so food was set up in Father George’s dining room—but by the end of the tour the threat of rain had diminished so that everyone was able to enjoy wine on the terrace. With lovely views and an ethereal atmosphere (thanks to the mist!), the evening could not have been more memorable and charming.

Father George was extremely generous in providing himself and his private space to benefit the MNHA. Also, a special thank you to Peggy Byrne for all her help in setting up the occasion.

Proceeds from the sold-out event went to the P&D Committee to help with research to extend the historic district. 



Left to right: Pauline Brooks, Fr. Rutler, Susan Demmet

Murray Hill Neighborhood Association Statement of Revenues and Expenditures with Cash Position Fiscal Year Ended February 29, 2012 (Unaudited for Management Purposes Only)	
Cash, March 1, 2011	\$ 23,091
<b>Revenues</b>	
Administration	15
Block Party	11,775
Community Services	7,680
Greening	24,096
Membership Services	41,392
Preservation and Design	19,258
Total	<u>\$ 104,216</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>	
Administration	11,611
Block Party	1,486
Community Services	5,139
Greening	48,970
Membership Services	33,642
Preservation and Design	18,219
Total	<u>\$ 119,067</u>
Cash, February 29, 2012	<u>\$ 8,240</u>