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"Queen of Doo-Wop" to Perform Free Show in The Bronx

By [Eddie Small](#) | October 28, 2015 3:54pm

SOUTH BRONX — The "Queen of Doo-Wop" is coming to The Bronx for a free concert.

Arlene Smith, who became famous in the 1950s as lead singer of the girl group [The Chantels](#), will perform on Oct. 28 at 7 p.m. in [Pregones Theater](#) on Walton Avenue between 149th and 150th streets, where the [Bronx Music Heritage Center](#) will honor her as a living legend.



Designed by Jordan Guerra, WHEDco

The Chantels consisted of Smith and four other girls who all attended St. Anthony of Padua Elementary School in The Bronx and also belonged to [St. Anthony's church choir](#).

"We came through at a very interesting time, musically, where everything was coming together," Smith said. "You had the pop that was played on the pop stations. You had the music that was being discovered, the black radio that was coming to the fore."

The girls hit it big in the late 1950s when they released "Maybe," which became a major hit and was the first song by a girl group to sell a million records.

[Rolling Stone](#) also ranked the song at 199 on their 2011 list of the [500 Greatest Songs of All Time](#), putting it just ahead of "[Don't Be Cruel](#)" by Elvis Presley and just behind "[Sweet Child O' Mine](#)" by Guns n' Roses.

Smith described music back then as extremely raw and genuine.

"There was very, very little enhancement," she said, "and the artist, what you heard is what they were feeling and what they were singing."

The Bronx Music Heritage Center, part of the [Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation](#), uses its Living Legends series to honor artists who have contributed significantly to music genres that were developed or innovated in The Bronx.

Past honorees include [hip-hop](#) founding father [DJ Kool Herc](#) and jazz pianist [Bertha Hope](#).

Despite growing up in The Bronx, Smith gave her parents more credit than the borough itself for influencing her musical career.

"I lived in The Bronx, but I lived in my home," she said, "and my biggest influences were my parents, my mother and father."

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