resource guide

THE TOTAL CREAT



new jersey
performing
arts center

productions





an interview with director/choreographer Jennifer Weber

"[The Hip Hop

Nutcracker is] a

new twist on a

holiday classic

diversity of the

world today..."

that reflects

What was your inspiration for creating a hip-hop version of *The Nutcracker*?

As an artist I am always interested in the collision of two worlds that seem extremely different on the surface. Mixing hip hop dance with classical music is something I have been exploring for a long time. I was once asked "how do you make hip hop vulnerable?" After various investigations, I came up with the idea to take away the 4/4 hip hop beat in order to reveal a wider range of emotional possibilities within the language.

The idea to create *The Hip Hop Nutcracker* was actually brought to me by my collaborator, Mike Fitelson. He wanted to create a new twist on a holiday classic that reflects the diversity of the world today. I love creating narrative dance theatre so this was a perfect opportunity for

me to explore hip hop as storytelling and what happens when music from the 1800s meets movement from today.

What message, or reaction, do you hope young audiences will come away with from this celebration?

I hope audiences understand the power of hip-hop as a language for storytelling. Somewhere between the classical score and the contemporary movement there is a celebration of the timelessness of holiday magic. I hope audiences will leave the theatre feeling inspired. I think the cast is extremely

inspiring in what they can physically do with their bodies and how they can use movement to so clearly tell a story. I also hope they are especially inspired by how strong the female members of our cast are. In hip-hop, it is all too often that the boys do all the power moves, but in our show, the girls take on the floor just as often as the guys!

Are there any similarities from the standard *Nutcracker* production that remain in the hip-hop version?

We use the classical Tchaikovsky score and we tell an updated translation of the famous holiday story. You will see the mice and soldiers battle, toys that come to life, a tree that grows, dancing snowflakes—all the elements are present, just with a hip-hop twist.

What can audiences expect to see from the dancers during this show?

Lots of energy, style, unique movement and magic. Our dancers are experts in a wide range of classic hip hop styles including breaking, popping, locking, and waving. They are also amazing freestyles and within the show we mix choreography and freestyle to be true to hip hop culture.

You have created many diverse productions in your field. How do those previous experiences play into your vision for the Hip Hop Nutcracker?

I think the more shows you create, the more you learn. In addition to *The Nutcracker*, I have choreographed Stravinsky's *Firebird* and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. I'm always looking for ways to be more articulate as a storyteller.

Tell us about your creative background. How and when did you get started?

I grew up dancing as a kid and then quit in high school. I went to the University of Pennsylvania and studied Communications, but while I was there, I missed dancing so much that I started a student-run dance company called "Strictly Funk." I just sort of appointed myself

director and got people to start working with me. Over the years I was at Penn, the company really took off. After I graduated, I came to NYC and pretty much did the same thing. It was a lot harder to do in NYC, but I got my first real choreography job from someone who saw me freestyling at a nightclub. I never looked back...

Who are your influences? For example, which educators had the biggest impact on you and your career?

My main inspirations are Steven Hoggett and Scott Graham of the British physical theatre company "Frantic Assembly." I was introduced to them while studying abroad in London. Their ability to use movement to tell stories is so raw and electrifying. I did a few workshops with them over the years and everything I know about choreography comes from those workshops. Other than that, I am completely self-taught. I am also inspired by anyone who doesn't follow the rules and makes their own path to the career of their dreams.

What important thematic connections do you hope young audiences will make?

I hope young audiences will see that at its root, The Hip Hop Nutcracker is about using dance to bring a community together. I think the idea of using art to create change is extremely important.

Tell us about your upcoming performances. What should young audiences key in on?

The energy of the audience is always so powerful. I hope people can take that energy with them to fuel their holiday season!

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inspired ideas in the classroom

	Teacher Focus	Student Activity	Curriculum Standar
Prepare for the performance	Understanding the Origins Show students paintings, photography, images, and graffiti that depict what life was like in the Bronx in the 1970s. Play "The Message" by Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five while students study the images. Explain that Hip Hop is an example of an artistic genre that emerged from a situation of poverty and oppression, thereby using art to turn a "negative into a positive". Ask students to turn their own negative situations into positive ones by writing affirmations. Affirmation: A statement, declaration or assertion that is encouraging and emotionally supportive like a positive message. Affirmations are written in the present tense as a desired outcome or intended result. Examples of Affirmations: I am "Notorious." I am brilliant & so are my ideas. I am dynamic & lit. Yes, Yes, Y'all!	The Message Study the images that reflect life in the Bronx during the 1970s. What do you observe? Listen to "The Message" by Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five while reflecting on what you see. Listen to the definition and examples of an "affirmation" to inspire positive messaging. Become the messenger by writing and sharing your own affirmative statement.	English Language Arts CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4 Social Studies NCSS.I.c NCSS.II.c National Arts Standards Anchor # 11
Experience the performance	Active Audience Members At the performance, encourage students to pay close attention to the movement, lighting, costumes, and music. Ask them what are they hoping to see? Ask them to think about the following as they watch the performance: How does the lighting and music make you feel? What emotions do you feel as you wait for the curtain to rise and the lights to dim? What's the vibe in the theater throughout the performance?	Engage Your Senses Listen to the music! What's the tone? How does it make you feel? Watch the lighting changes! What does it say about the mood? How does that add to your experience? Notice how the music and lights play a role in telling the story. How do the two art forms (ballet and hip hop) work together in the performance?	National Arts Standards Anchor #7
Reflect, respond and read	Ask students to recall what stood out to them from the performance. Where did the scenes take place? Who were some of the characters they remember? What was that character's role in the story? What are some points of conflict the characters experienced in the show? Cypher: An informal gathering of rappers, beatboxers, and/or break-dancers in a circle, in order to jam musically together. Prepare students to participate in a cypher by showing them the following video. Check out how the cypher supports creative risk taking! youtu.be/WYdb5snAlJc	Chain Reaction Form a circle (or cypher) and call out a character, setting, or conflict from the show. Students start a chain reaction by making a gesture or a movement with their body based off of this word or phrase. They send this movement to the person next to them, who then mimics the move and adds on to it. That person then passes the new movement to the next person, and so on. It continues down the line causing a "chain reaction" and response. What movements were used to express specific characters and/or situations? What was the "mood" of each character and situation?	English Language Arts CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2 National Arts Standards Anchor #3
Focus	Focus on Your Favorites Based on what students learned about <i>The Nutcracker</i> and Hip Hop, as well as what they saw in the show, ask students to share what they thought about combining ballet and breakdancing. Do they think ballet and breakdance go together well? Ask them to focus on one particular character, setting, or conflict from the show that successfully shows a blending of ballet and breakdance.	Repurpose, Reuse, Remix Based on what you know about <i>The Nutcracker</i> and Hip Hop, do you think ballet and breakdance go together well? Focus on one particular character, setting, or conflict from the show that successfully shows a blending of ballet and breakdance.	Social Studies NCSS.II.c National Arts Standards Anchor #7
Originate	Positive Agents of Change Have students recall how Hip Hop is an example of how art can be used to transform a negative into a positive. As a large group, brainstorm and create a list of things in the environment, society,school or neighborhood that are seen as "negatives" - obstacles and barriers for living well. How does this impact their environment, school, and neighborhood? Challenge students to become innovators and come up with a creative, "positive" solution to one of the negatives they identified.	"What's the Scenario" As unstoppable innovators, use your imagination to create an "out of this world" solution in the spirit of giving a gift to those in need. Work together in small crews to develop your invention. You can choreograph a dance in any style, act out a commercial, create a rap/spoken word piece, design a poster, or make a beat using your mouth and objects in class.	English Language Arts CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL National Arts Standards Anchor #1 Anchor #11
Rehearse	All About the Process Give students time and space to rehearse their solutions. Talk to students about the importance of improvising in the process of art making. Remind them that there is no right or wrong when it comes to creating. Everything is useful. Keep what you like the most and forget the rest. Practice that on purpose!	Press Play Time to practice and make a power move! Be bold and make sure everyone in the group plays a role. It may be writing the script, recording sounds, or reading what someone else wrote! Everyone's ideas and expression is valuable. Practice playfully, include improvising as a part of the plan, and use your mistakes to create!	National Arts Standards Anchor #5
Make magic	"Be Free and Fly!" Arrange students in a circle formation (a cypher) for them to share their creative solutions. Encourage them to be free and fly!	Now open up your gift! Everybody plays. There are no spectators, only participators. While each crew is sharing their gift, give your attention and energy to the cypher and add to the vibe. We make the movement happen by being present in the moment. Break out of your shell and be transformed!	National Arts Standards Anchor #6 Anchor #7 Anchor #8

curriculum standards

National Core Arts Anchor Standards

- 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- 3: Refine and complete artistic work.
- 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
- 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

FIND THE STANDARDS

For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:

NATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy

NATIONAL SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS socialstudies.org/standards

NATIONAL CORE ARTS ANCHOR STANDARDS nationalartsstandards.org

common core state standards

English Language Arts

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Social Studies

NCSS.I.c

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity, so that the learner can describe ways in which language, stories, folktales, music, and artistic creations serve as expressions of culture and influence behavior of people living in a particular culture.

NCSS.II.C

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over time, so that the learner can compare and contrast different stories or accounts about past events, people, places, or situations, identifying how they contribute to our understanding of the past.

cultural connections



Breaking Barriers in the Arts

Throughout the 20th century until today, artists of color have infused their work with their unique experiences and perspectives in order to give it equal footing to the larger cultural hegemony in the United States. Using the arts as a medium to bridge greater cultural understanding, artists of color have used art as a form of activism, enlightening American society about the cultural and historic contributions of African Americans and creating a pathway for other artists of color to succeed.

James Baldwin, born on August 2, 1924, in Harlem, New York, is considered of the 20th century's greatest writers and cultural critics. He is known for writing about the injustices faced by African Americans when confronting and living with institutional white supremacy. Baldwin wrote, "The role of the artist is exactly the same as the role of the lover. If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you don't see."

Baldwin broke new literary ground with the exploration of racial and social issues in his literary works such as

Go Tell it on the Mountain and If Beale Street Could Talk. Disillusioned by American prejudice against African Americans, he desired to free himself of the boundaries of being "merely a Negro; or, even, merely a Negro writer."

Baldwin left the U.S. in 1948, at the age of 24, to settle in Paris. Over the next forty years, he would travel back and forth from Europe to the U.S. to continue to be a force in the Civil Rights movement and influence other writers and artists of color to push the boundaries of cultural norms. He wrote, "I love America more than any other country in the world and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually."

Alvin Ailey, born on January 5, 1931, in Rogers, Texas, was one of the leading figures in 20th-century modern dance. As an African-American choreographer and activist, he had essentially the same artistic goals as Baldwin. He founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the hugely popular, multi-racial modern dance ensemble that popularized modern dance around the world thanks to extensive world tours. Ailey took

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cultural connections

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influences from western styles of dance including modern dance, ballet, and jazz, and blended them with his memories of celebration and worship in the African American Baptist church.

Ailey envisioned a company where African American dancers could display their talents and skills, but also express their heritage. His first performance was at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. He debuted *Blues Suite*, a piece that drew on the music and characters of the Texas communities he had traveled through as a child. Blues Suite was widely praised by critics, and gave Ailey the confidence and support needed to continue developing and staging his own works.

In his third production at the 92nd Street Y, Ailey premiered *Revelations*. With graceful modern dance movements set to gospel music, spirituals and the blues, this piece secured Ailey's position as one of the foremost choreographers in America. Since its premiere, more than 23 million people in 71 countries have seen *Revelations*—more than any other modern dance work in history.

In its original form, the company was comprised of eight African American dancers. However, with its immediate popularity and demanding performance schedule, the company quickly grew to include Caucasian and Asian dancers by the mid-1960s. By the 1970s Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was one of the most sought after companies in the world.

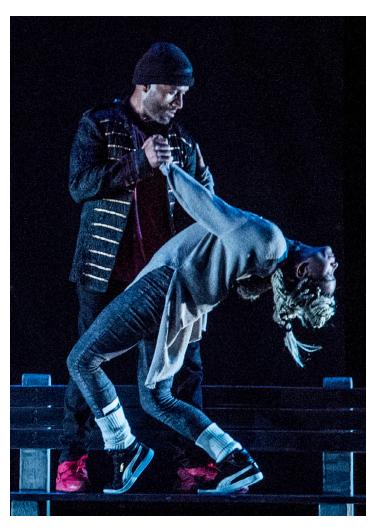
A precursor and early mentor to Ailey was **Katherine Dunham**, a choreographer and anthropologist who had one of the most successful dance careers in African-American and European theater of the 20th century. Dunham was known for melding ballet and modern dance with folk and ethnic choreography as well as founding the anthropological dance movement. Dunham was inspired to form her own dance company after returning from a fellowship studying dance and ethnography in the Caribbean as a college student, from which she found new appreciation for her African heritage and the rich culture of the African diaspora.

From a contemporary standpoint, generations of young dancers have been inspired by **Misty Copeland**, the first African American principal ballet dancer for the American Ballet Theater (ABT). Until she attained this position, principal ballet dancers were only Caucasian. It was inconceivable to many traditional followers of ballet that Swan Lake would have a black dancer, Copeland has said.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri and raised in San Pedro, California, Copeland began her ballet studies at age of thirteen, which is considered late to begin ballet studies. Misty joined ABT's Studio Company in September of 2000. In June 2015, Misty was promoted to principal dancer, making her the first African American woman to ever be promoted to the position in the company's 75-year history.

"We don't know in history that black women, from the beginning of time in ballet, have been told to lighten their skin, and to shade their nose in a certain way to look white," Copeland said. "A big part of my youth at American Ballet Theater was hearing those words."

In order to encourage dancers that look like her, Copeland has given public talks about her experience and conveyed her inclusive message through children's books such as *Bunheads*, which came out in Fall 2020.



vocabulary

Acrobatic

Something performed with remarkable agility and ease.

Authentic

Of undisputed origin and not a copy; genuine.

Back Spin

A technique used by DJs to rewind the record to a particular place or to intentionally make a sound.

B-Boy or B-Girl

B-Boying/B-Girling represents the dance element of Hip Hop culture. B-boy is derived from "break boy". One of the most direct influences on B-boying may have been James Brown's 1969 hit "Get on the Good Foot." In film footage, James Brown does a dance called the Good Foot for the song. The Good Foot was a fast athletic and easily lent itself to dance battles between two opponents. Dancers who adapted the Good Foot style would dance in the "break" of a song.

Breakin' or Breakdancing

A major genre of hip-hop dance that is highly energetic and utilizes complex and acrobatic moves, fancy and quick footwork, stylish poses called freezes, and the use of both hands and feet to propel the dancer on the dance floor. Usually highly improvisational, dancers (also called b-boys or b-girls) battle with each other in a circle to determine who is the better dancer.

Break it down

Choreography by demonstrating the moves slowly and showing the separate elements as much as possible.

Choreography

The sequence of steps and movements in dance.

Deeigy

Person who plays records for a live audience. In hip-hop, deejays are hugely important because they developed the bedrock foundation for rap music. Back in the day, deejays mixed and sampled other records to make new songs, and they also pioneered the use of record turntables as a musical instrument. Turntable techniques, such as moving a record back and forth under a record player's needle - which is called scratching - became integral parts of early hip-hop music. DJ Kool Herc is widely acknowledged as the father of hip-hop. He developed unique turntable techniques in the 1970s while throwing block parties in the Bronx.

Downrock

A term for breakdance moves done on the floor with hands and feet touching the floor often.

Eight Count

Each count is one beat in the rhythm of the music. Each set of eight beats is an eight count.

Emce

Short for master of ceremonies or MC. The host or announcer at a party or event. At early hip-hop parties, emcees would introduce the crowd to the deejay and make announcements. Their role eventually morphed into pumping up the crowd during these events to performing rhymes along with a song's beat. MCs in hip-hop became another term for a rapper, someone who recites rhyming verses to a beat.

Freestyle

Dancing without choreography to be more self-expressive.

Freeze

A type of breakdance move where the dancer - who's usually low to the floor - quickly assumes an acrobatic move and stays there for a couple of seconds. There are variations such as baby or chair freeze.

Groove

Large, rhythmic dance moves performed using your entire body.

Head Spin

A dance move that involves the dancer spinning on their head with their torso perpendicular to the floor. Dancers usually wear a knit hat to facilitate spinning. They also use their arms and legs (raised out into the air) to control or speed up the momentum.

Hip Hor

Style of popular music, featuring rap with an electronic backing.

Hiplet

Founded in Chicago by Homer Hans Bryant of the Chicago Multicultural Dance Center; a combination of hip hop or ballet where moves are done on point openly & freely as an extension of traditional classic dance that is nondiscriminatory and empowering

Improvisation

A particular piece in drama or music that is being created spontaneously without preparation.

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vocabulary

Krumping

Bay area dance style derived from Clowning to express rage, assert power as a tool for conflict resolution.

Lite Feet

Cultural dance originated in Harlem

Lockin'

Developed by Don Campbell trying to imitate a local dance called the "funky chicken," added an effect of locking of the joints of his arms and body, thus creating his signature dance. The group called Lockers was established to help develop the locking dance. Lockin' mesh combinations of steps and moves to a freeze or a sudden pause. Lock combinations can consist of a series of points done by extending the arms and pointing them in different directions.

Mood (as a modifier, especially in music)

Inducing or suggestive of a particular feeling or state of mind.

Narrative

A spoken or written account of connected events.

Nutcracker

A tool designed to open nuts by cracking their shells; according to German folklore, they were given as keepsakes to bring good luck and protect the home.

Oppression

Keep someone in subjection or hardship, especially by the unjust exercise of authority.

Plié: (pronounced plee - ay)

A French dance term borrowed from ballet; most of hip hop is performed in plie, meaning with the knees bent.

Poppin'

Style of dance created by Los Angeles street dance crew Electric Boogaloo Lockers (aka Electronic Boogaloo Lockers). Poppin was the term used to describe the specific dance moves comprised of sudden muscle contractions done with the triceps, forearms, neck, chest, and legs. These contractions emphasized the dancer's movement, causing a quick, jolting effect.

Relevé: (pronounced reh - leh - vay)

A French dance term borrowed from ballet; go up on the toes while dancing.

Samplina

To record or extract a small piece of sound or music for reuse as a part of a composition or song.

Synchronize

To cause to occur or operate at the same time or rate.

Tone

A musical or vocal sound; modulation of the voice expressing a particular feeling or mood.

Top Rock

Foot movement performed from a standing position, relying upon a mixture of coordination, flexibility, rhythm, and most importantly, style. It is usually the first and foremost opening display of style, and it serves as a warm-up for transitions into the more acrobatic maneuvers.

Tuttin'

A type of dance element that involves people moving mostly their fingers, hands and arms in intricate, angular, inventive movements. Name refers to how the dance resembles Ancient Egyptian poses in art, i.e. King Tut.

Uprock

Dance move combinations done upright involving inventive and intricate foot shuffles, robotic movements, tuttin', waving and other hip-hop dance elements.

Vulnerable

Exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally.

Waving

Movement that mimics the motion of a wave

Whacking/Waacking

Disco influenced dance moves from the West Coast LGBTQ community. Circular and twisting movements of arms and hands to disco-style rhythms

Windmills

Popular breakdance move where a dancer pivots on the floor in a circle using their hands and torso on the ground while sweeping their legs in the air like a windmill.

resources

Websites

learntodance.com/hip-hop-dance-videos-online

hiphop1010nline.com/history/hip-hop-history-timeline

bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/5CWQyWXZ4p7hr6NxG2L5qG9

Small History of Hip Hop

daveyd.com/historyphysicalgrafittifabel.htm

E.T.A Hoffmann's fairytale The Nutcracker and the Mouse King (audio)

springhole.net/writing/the_nutcracker_and_the_mouse_king

Holiday Rap Songs & Videos

"Christmas Rap" by Kurtis Blow

youtu.be/gxUFnGWWtoQ

"Christmas in Hollis" by RUN DMC

voutu.be/ORo7roZMFb8

A great example of using music to express a personalized and culturally specific holiday experience

"Sleigh Ride" by TLC song and lyrics youtu.be/3yPwsnj7DG4

"Shake The Dust"

youtu.be/oboOULRicBI

"All The Ladies Say"

youtu.be/thBEFVruFBw

Rapoetics: Elements Of Poetry In Eminem's Lyrics popartmachine.com/rapoetics-elements-of-poetry-in-eminems-lyrics/

'The Anthology Of Rap': Lyrics As Poetry

Americans Have Never Loved Poetry More— But They Call It Rap

thedailybeast.com/americans-have-never-loved-poetry-morebut-they-call-it-rap



Videos

3 Simple Dance Moves for Beginners:

The History of Hip Hop Dancing:

Street Performers, Downtown Manhattan, New York:

The Cipher, the Circle & its Wisdom:
Toni Blackman at TED x UMass Amherst
youtu.be/WYdb5snAJJc

"My Favorite Things" by Substantial feat. Steph youtu.be/vQkZJwKoqWs

 A great example of a well-known work being ReUsed/ RePurposed/Remixed as it combines Jazz & Hip Hop cues.

"My Adidas" by RUN DMC

youtu.be/JNua1FDuDI

 A great example of personification, descriptive storytelling and using rap music for marketing & advertising! RUN DMC raps about the significance of their footwear and has you travel the path of their prints!

Uprock dance battle

youtube.com/watch?v=_YZDRgahYOc

Best of Bboy Kaku's crazy headspin and power 2015-2016
youtube.com/watch?v=xxt6b4Lo2gU

This is Tutting

youtube.com/watch?v=TbBqtuYvags on page 6

Books

Chang, Jeff, Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation, Picador, December 27, 2005

Cooper, Martha. Kramer, Nika. Rokafella, We B*Girlz, powerHouse Books, September 1, 2005

Huntington, Carla Stalling, *Hip-Hop Dance: Meanings* and Messages, McFarland & Company, March 23, 2007

DJ Cool V, Dutch, Luciano. The Symphony.

KRS-ONE, *Ruminations*, Welcome Rain Publishers; Har/Com edition, June 12, 2003

Rosa, Tricia, *Black Noise*, Wesleyan; 1st edition, May 15, 1994

Schloss, Joseph G., Foundation: B-boys, B-girls and Hip-Hop Culture in New York, Oxford University Press, March 5. 2009

Bynoe, Yvonne., Encyclopedia of Rap and Hip Hop Culture. Greenwood Press. 2006

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and

Executive Producer
EVA PRICE

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