

Study Guide



PITTSBURGH CULTURAL TRUST ARTS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
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Show Description

The Hip Hop Nutcracker is a modern holiday mash-up for the entire family. Writer Mike Fitelson, choreographer Jennifer Weber, and hip-hop legend Kurtis Blow have twisted the original ballet and mixed up Tchaikovsky's timeless music to give a contemporary **head-spin** on the popular ballet. This evening-length production is performed by a supercharged cast of a dozen all-star dancers. DJ Boo remixes along with an electric violinist as they create **hip-hop** interludes throughout the show.

Innovative digital graffiti and visuals transform the German landscape of E.T.A. Hoffmann's beloved 19th-century fairytale full of sugarplums to the vibrant, diverse sights and sounds of colorful 1980s Brooklyn. "We've got some of the best dancers in the world performing in a show that is being reimaged in a truly spectacular way," says Blow. "The creative team has turned this old classic into a new classic, and audiences love this new adaptation everywhere we go."

The Hip Hop Nutcracker celebrates love, community and the magic of New Year's Eve. Through the spells cast by the mysterious Drosselmeyer, young Maria-Clara and her Nutcracker prince travel back in time to the moment when her parents first meet – in a nightclub. Their journey is a dreamy adventure as they battle with a gang of mice, visit the Land of Sweets and learn the lessons of the holiday season. Through the expression of **hip-hop** culture, the dynamic performers of *The Hip Hop Nutcracker* celebrate the magic of the entire holiday season. It is a time for new beginnings on the most inclusive holiday of them all—New Year's Eve!



Show Roles

Special Guest MC	KURTIS BLOW
The Nutcracker	ANTHONY “OMEN” CABRERA
Chocolate, Ensemble	ESITA “FLYYA” CALHOUN
Tea, Ensemble	ATHENA CRUZ
Toy, Ensemble	MICHAEL DELGADO
Maria-Clara	HALIMA DODO
Dad	G’BARI “GQ” GILLIAM
Mouse King, Ensemble	SETH “REAKTION” HILLARD
Flute, Ensemble	TRENT JERAY
Candy, Ensemble	BAPTISTA KAWA
Drosselmeyer	TUMELO “MELO” KHUPE
Toy, Ensemble	ZUCE MORALES
Mom	JESSE SMITH



Cultural Context

- What we now know as the **Hip-Hop** dance style began as a way for people living in urban areas to tell a different story. Beginning in the Bronx, New York in the 1970s, **Breakin'**, or **Breakdancing** was created by street dancers. While most dance styles are developed in a studio with trained teachers, "**B-boys**" practiced in urban neighborhoods without a formal process or teaching.
- **Breakin'** was the main urban dance style for more than a decade.
- Through the song's rhythm, and the beats the DJ selected, the dancers' movements matched the MC's rhyme patterns.
- **Breakin'** ruled until it began to fade in the mid-1980s. This era was identified when DJ Afrika Bambaataa named the dynamic urban movement "**hip-hop**."
- **Hip Hop** dance includes a wide range of street-dance styles that are associated with these urban values. For example, **Hip-Hop Freestyle** is **improvisational**. Dance crews would often hold competitions, which are often referred to as "battles." **Hip-hop** dance is a very special form because it can be done in many ways – whether as a private, personal hobby or on the stage performing for an audience. It is also a great way to stay active in competitive dance or to make a living by dancing professionally.
- **Hip-Hop** is a personal expression of the dancer that can help to tell his or her story.
- In **hip-hop**, **DJs** are hugely important because they developed the bedrock foundation for rap music. Back in the day, **DJs** 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.
- 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.
- At early **hip-hop** parties, **emcees** would introduce the crowd to the **DJ** 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.

Supplemental Activities

Let's Compare Music to Movement!

MASH IT UP (6-12)

Step 1: Separate students into 4 groups

Step 2: Play slower music (e.g. Chopin's "Nocturne in E flat major op. 9 no. 2").

Step 3: In their groups, instruct students to create an 8-count of movement that's fast and "choppy" feeling.

Step 4: Rearrange the groups.

Step 5: Play faster music (e.g. Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumblebee").

Step 6: In their new groups, instruct students to create an 8-count of movement that's slow and "smooth" feeling.

OPPOSITE DAY (K-5)

Step 1: Play Edvard Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King."

Step 2: Listen to the music all the way through.

Step 3: In groups or as a class, dance to the music in a way that matches the tempo of the song (slowly at first, a bit faster in the middle, and as quickly as possible at the end.)

Step 4: Then switch and dance to the music in a way that is opposite of the tempo (as quickly as possible in the beginning, matching tempo in the middle, and super slow at the end.)

Vocabulary

Acrobatic - Something performed with remarkable agility and ease. of these elements was the music.

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”.

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.

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.

DJ - Person who plays records for a live audience.

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.

Emcee - Short for master of ceremonies or MC. The host or announcer at a party or event.

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.

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 Hop - Style of popular music featuring rap with an electronic backing.

Vocabulary (cont.)

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.

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 while imitating the "funky chicken," this dance adds an effect of locking of the joints of the body.

Mood - 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; describes 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 ballet term meaning to go up on the toes while dancing.

Sampling - 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.

Vocabulary (cont.)

Tuttin' - A type of dance element that involves people moving mostly their fingers, hands and arms in intricate, angular, inventive movements.

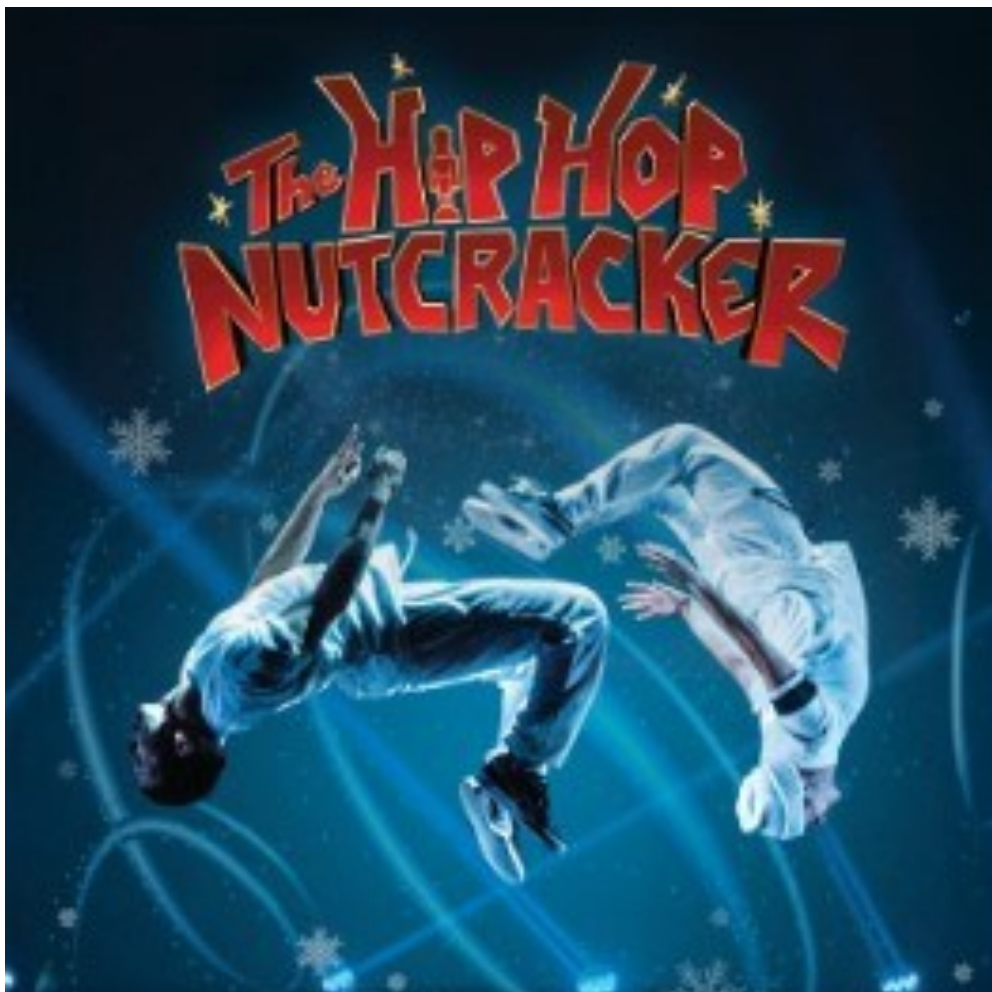
Uprock - Dance move combinations done upright involving inventive and intricate foot shuffles, robotic movements, tuttin', waving and other hip-hop dance elements.

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



Pre and Post Show Discussion Questions

Pre-Show Discussion Questions

1. What do you already know about Hip Hop?
2. What do you already know about The Nutcracker?
3. What are some examples of dance moves seen in classic hip hop?
4. What are some examples of dance moves seen in classic ballet?
5. What do you expect to see in a mash up of the two genres?

Post-Show Discussion Questions

1. What dance moves from the vocab list did you see on the stage?
2. What was similar between this performance and the original Nutcracker?
3. What were some differences that you noticed?
4. Are there any other genre mash ups you've seen in

School Day Matinees

Doktor Kaboom: Under Pressure! (grades 3-8)

Wednesday, January 22, 2025

The Collaboration Festival: A Celebration of the African Diaspora (grades K-8)

Wednesday, February 12, 2025

Thursday, February 13, 2025

Ballet Folklórico de México (grades 5-12)

Thursday, March 6, 2025

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Musical! (grades PreK-2) - *waitlist*

Thursday, April 24, 2025

Friday, April 25, 2025

360 All Stars (all grades) - *waitlist*

Wednesday, May 14, 2024

Thursday, May 15, 2024

123 Andrés (grades PreK-2)

Friday, May 16, 2025

Scan for more information



Professional Development Workshops

STEAM Stage: Math and Engineering through Performing Arts

Saturday, February 8, 2025—for Early Childhood - 2nd Grade Educators
ACT 48 and PQAS Credit Available

Developing Authentic STEAM Experiences in the Classroom

Saturday, March 8, 2025—for K-12 Educators
ACT 48 Credit Available

Connecting to the Community

Saturday, April 12, 2025—for Early Childhood and K-12 Educators
ACT 48 Credit Available

Visual Arts and Social-Emotional Learning

Saturday, May 10, 2025—for Early Childhood and K-12 Educators
ACT 48 and PQAS Credit Available

*All workshops held in the **Trust Arts Education Center (805/807 Liberty Ave).***

Light breakfast provided

Scan for more information

