

URBANGATEWAYS

BREAKIN' IT DOWN: HIP HOP HISTORY CHICAGO DANCE CRASH



ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

This highly-interactive performance focuses on the history of various hip hop dance styles, including popping, waving, funk, breakdancing, and more. Students will learn about the development of this now iconic dance style, from its early start in freestyle back in the 1960s to the choreography seen in today popular culture. With an emphasis on individuality and creativity, Breakin' It Down will introduce students to more than just the history behind hip hop dancing, it will encourage them to find their own voice and use dance as a means of self-expression.

MEET THE ARTISTS

Lead by Artistic Director Jessica Deahr, Chicago Dance Crash is a contemporary dance company performing at home while touring nationally boasting an aesthetic that's both unique and accessible, and manifests itself in a diverse array of programming opportunities that appeal to audiences of all ages, cultures, and income levels across Chicagoland. We want dance to change lives, and as such, we present dance that we believe is invigorating and accessible and that newcomers will be curious and motivated to see.

Founded in 2002, our company has an aesthetic and creative vision that has evolved over the past decade into a style of performance and tone of production that awakens longtime concert dance patrons with something fresh and invigorating while appealing to the curiosity of the masses whose exposure to dance hasn't grown beyond the latest reality-based network game show. This movement aesthetic and performance style is also channeled through an aggressive outreach program aimed at underserved areas of the Chicagoland community.

<https://chicagodancecrash.com/the-company/>

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- PA system with aux cable
- One microphone, preferably wireless
- Floor cannot be concrete
- Minimum 20' x 12' performance space

MEET THE ARTISTS *Continued*

Our programming offers us the opportunity to enrich diverse audiences through our own work, while also lifting and promoting the community of dancers, choreographers, organizations, and companies with opportunities through our producing efforts. We cast a wide net in terms of age, race, and tax brackets with our programming, and our range in movement styles provides an appealing product to fans of classic, contemporary, and urban genres, as well as those unfamiliar with dance altogether.

As expected, these dancers are as diverse as the program title suggests. Combining for decades of professional performance and teaching experience, the ensemble's training background ranges from Oklahoma and Atlanta to LA, London, and Chicago's Southside. Consistently featured in performance festivals here in the U.S., Crash dancers' TV credits include programs in Italy, France, and back here at home including "So You Think You Can Dance." As a collective whole, the "History of Dance" team is versed and ready to perform, teach, speak on, and freestyle ballet, jazz, breaking, funk, contemporary, gymnastics, capoeira regional, aerial work, house, ballroom, tap, and countless modern techniques.

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Hip Hop is not just a dance style, it is a cultural movement that started in the 1970s in New York City and consists of four different elements: emceeing (or rapping), graffiti, DJing, and breakdancing (also called b-boying). Hip hop was started primarily among African-American and Latino youth as a form of self-expression and response to their surroundings.

Hip hop became a popular movement for young urban people because of the freedom and accessibility it offered. Unlike most dance styles, early breakdancers did not need to have formal training and there were no established rules. Breakdancing was developed as a way to respond to your given surroundings, be seen and heard in your community, and share your artistic voice with others. New moves were showcased in the streets, eventually leading to dance battles. Crews were developed over time as a way for breakdancers to come together, show off their unique styles, learn new moves, and battle other crews in a non-violent form of self-expression.

Before there was breakdancing, though, there were funk styles of dance (popping, locking, waving, and tutting) that were developed in California in the 1960s and early 1970s. These dances were not originally considered hip hop styles because they were performed to funk music and also did not connect with the other cultural pillars – emceeing, graffiti, and DJing.

Breakdancing gets its name from the "break beat," which is when one instrument, typically drums, is isolated and plays a repeating rhythm. One of the early examples of a musician utilizing a break beat is James Brown's Funky Drummer. DJs would isolate and loop drum rhythms (pulled from soul, funk, or other genres), creating a sample that could be repeated. It was during this break beat, that dancers would flood the floor, showing off their best moves. DJ Afrika Bambaataa, one of the early pioneers in hip hop, described the break beat as "that certain part of the record that everybody waits for...[where] they just let their inner self go and get wild."

While hip hop dance has evolved over time to include more defined techniques and choreography, it is important to remember that the foundation was young people creating innovative ways of self-expression through dance.

Chicago Guide for Teaching and Learning in Arts: Scope and Sequence

Dance Literacy:

History and Culture (*Anchor Standard 11: DA: Cn11.1.III*)

- Analyze dances from several genres or styles, historical periods, and/or world dance forms. Discuss how dance movement characteristics, techniques, and artistic criteria relate to the ideas and perspectives of the peoples from which the dances originate. Discuss the impact on one's dance literacy.

Critical and Creative Thinking:

(*Anchor Standard 4: DA:Pr4.1.4*)

- Analyze movements and phrases for use of energy and dynamic changes and use adjectives and adverbs to describe them. Refine the phrases by incorporating a range of movement characteristics.

Interpretation & Evaluation:

(*Anchor Standard 2: DA:Cr1.1.I*)

- Experiment with the elements of dance to explore personal movement preferences and strengths. Select movements that challenge skills and build on strengths in an original dance study or dance.

SHOW INTRODUCTION

On the day of the performance, please have someone from the school read the following when welcoming the performers onstage: "Today we have a show from Urban Gateways. We are so excited to have Chicago Dance Crash here with us today. Their show is called *Breakin' It Down: Hip Hop History*. Please give the performers your full attention, and welcome them to the stage."

VOCABULARY

BREAK BEAT

Part of song when one instrument, typically drums, is isolated and plays a repeating rhythm. DJs used this break beat to create the founding rhythms of hip hop music and breakdancing.

BREAKDANCING

Also called 'breaking' or 'B-boying' it's a style of street dance that originated among African American and Puerto Rican youths in New York City during the early 1970s.

CHOREOGRAPHY

Movement that is rehearsed and planned out ahead of time.

DOWNROCK

An element of breakdancing that focuses on floor work where hands, elbows, or other parts of the body are used to support a dancer as much as feet.

FREESTYLE

Movement that is thought of on the spot, improvisation.

FREEZE

A lute, or violin-like instrument, that has four strings and is used in Gagaku music.

FUNK

A style of music popular in the 1960s and 1970s.

HIP HOP

A classification of artistic forms stemming from New York City in the 1970's including dance, DJing, MCing, and graffiti art.

POPPING

The earliest funk style of dance that involves the contraction and release of muscles that gives a robotic-like impression.

POWER MOVES

An element of breakdancing where a dancer performs a highly-impressive move, examples include windmills, headspins, and flips.

TOPROCK

An element of breakdancing that focuses on foot movement (or footwork) that is often used as a transition in between power moves.

TUTTING

A funk style of dance that is inspired by Egyptian Hieroglyphics and uses sharp and angular wrist and arm movements. The name comes from King Tutankhamen (King Tut).

WAVING

A funk style of dance that where the dancer gives the illusion of a wave passing through their body.

RESOURCES

Early Funky Dancing (video)

Breakdancing Battle demo (video)

Hip Hop Lesson Plans

Get Free: Hip Hop Civics Ed curriculum

<https://goo.gl/Pwh5gf>

<https://goo.gl/4tjSRp>

<https://goo.gl/X3fRz7>

<https://goo.gl/LDGGEW>

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

1. Play different songs and ask students to move how the music makes them feel (play classical, salsa, appropriate hip hop, etc.). Afterwards, have a discussion about why they chose to move the way they did? Why do certain styles of dance go with certain styles of music? Make connections to freestyle and self-expression.
2. Classroom Discussion: Why do people dance? Why is it important in society?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

1. Have your own classroom dance battle! Encourage them to incorporate what they learned or saw during the show. Encourage students to get creative and have fun!
2. Watch a video of a dance battle and have students identify the different elements of funk (waving, popping, locking, tutting) and breakdancing (toprock, downrock, power moves, and freeze). Assign each element a hand gesture and ask students to use gestures while watching clip.