HOPKINS CENTER FOR THE ARTS
SCHOOL MATINEE SERIES
STUDY GUIDE
2015 • 2016

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COMPANHIA URBANA DE DANÇA
PRESENTS
NA PISTA

Hopkins Center Outreach & Arts Education • hop.dartmouth.edu/outreach • 603.646.2010
WELCOME TO THE HOP
A performance needs an audience, so be prepared to play your part!

THEATER ETIQUETTE
When entering the Hopkins Center, show consideration for all those sharing the building by remaining quiet and respectful in common areas.

Be aware and use quiet voices. Remember that live theater differs greatly from watching television or movies or attending a sporting event. Live performers can hear and see you and are easily distracted by any talking or moving around in the audience. Even the smallest sounds can be heard throughout the theater, so it’s best to be quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance.

Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation!

Important things to remember: Backpacks, food, drink and gum are not allowed in the theater. Please turn off all cell phones and note that recording the performance or taking any photos is strictly prohibited. Hats off! It is respectful to remove hats during your time in the theater.

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS
Be prepared and arrive early. You should arrive at the theater 30 to 45 minutes before the show. Allow for travel time, parking, and trips to the restroom. You should be in your seat at least 15 minutes before the performance begins.

Have a head count. On the day of the performance be sure to have an accurate head count of students, chaperones, and teachers.

Staying for lunch? Please call 603.646.2010 no later than one week in advance of the show to make a reservation for lunch. The day of the show, bring lunches in marked boxes and give them to a Hop staff member. Lunches will be ready for you after the show in Alumni Hall.

Photo Policy. The Hopkins Center may take photographs during the performance for use on our website or on promotional materials. If you or your students do not wish to be photographed, please see a Hop staff member.

The Show Must Go On! We do not cancel events due to inclement weather. Performances will only be canceled if the artist is unable to reach the theater. Schools will be notified by phone if the performance has been cancelled. We do not issue refunds for weather-related cancellations; please feel free to fill empty seats with other school or community members.

This study guide was created for you by the Outreach & Arts Education team. To download copies of this study guide, see additional past study guides, please visit: www.hop.dartmouth.edu/outreach.

ENJOY THE SHOW!
Hopkins Center Outreach Department:
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The Hopkins Center Outreach & Arts Education department embodies the Hop’s mission to “ignite and sustain a passion for the arts.” It provides Dartmouth, the community and beyond rare personal contact with artists and a broad context for the performing arts. Unveiling the creative process of extraordinarily diverse artists, Outreach programs touch more than 14,000 lives each year.

DID YOU KNOW?
• The Hopkins Center opened in 1962.
• The Hopkins Center was designed by Wallace Harrison, architect of Lincoln Center and the United Nations Building in New York City.
• The first three rows of The Moore Theater are on an elevator that goes eleven feet below ground to create an orchestra pit and can also be raised to the height of the stage to make it larger.
• In The Moore Theater, the area over the stage, called the “fly loft,” is 63 feet tall.
ABOUT THE ARTISTS: COMPANHIA URBANA DE DANÇA

Companhia Urbana de Dança is a unique dance group with roots in hip-hop, capoeira, urban and contemporary dance from Brazil. Directed by choreographer Sonia Destri Lie, the group consists of nine young dancers from the suburbs and favelas in Rio de Janeiro. The company originated in 2004 when Destri Lie was looking for dancers to perform in a fashion show. In her casting call she met many young talented men from the favelas who were full of potential and had never performed outside of their communities. The dancers—eight young men and one woman—have persevered through many challenges to make the company a success. Some perform despite a lack of support from their parents, pursue dance to avoid drugs and violence in their community or travel up to five hours through dangerous neighborhoods to attend rehearsals.

Companhia Urbana de Dança fully emerged as a company when a festival director took notice of their work and invited the dancers to an international dance festival in France. The company has changed members extensively throughout its existence, growing into the critically-acclaimed group it is today. By recognizing the artistic talents of young street dancers and incorporating formal and street dance styles, the company showcases the potential of black Brazilian youth and contemporary urban dance. Companhia Urbana de Dança has showcased its award-winning talents and unique dance vocabulary throughout Brazil and South America, as well as in Europe and the United States.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE: NA PISTA

At the Hopkins Center, Companhia will perform Na Pista, which means “on the dance floor.” The performance developed out of an exploration of each individual dancer’s roots, and it explores themes of the streets of Rio de Janeiro, the complexity of the human experience within this environment and the dancers’ personal histories. Na Pista fills the dance floor with choreography inspired by the rhythms that were part of the dancers’ daily lives growing up. They celebrate youth culture and the social dances of urban Rio, playing games, dancing in pairs and in groups and casually chatting with each other onstage. Every single dancer gets the opportunity to express his or her unique personality and special talents, while congenially interacting with the rest of the company—a festive expression of the individual as part of a community.

ABOUT THE CHOREOGRAPHER: SONIA DESTRI LIE

Sonia Destri Lie is the founder, artistic director and choreographer of Companhia Urbana de Dança. Destri Lie has degrees in both psychology and ballet, giving her a unique perspective on human expression and human form. After completing her studies, Destri Lie travelled throughout Brazil and Europe, working in dance, theater, film and musicals. It was in Europe she discovered hip hop dance. Her works creatively embrace elements of hip hop, contemporary dance and Brazilian social dances.
CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: HIP-HOP DANCE

Hip hop is an art form that includes deejaying (DJing), emceeing (MCing), rapping, breakdancing and graffiti art. These art forms originated in the South Bronx section of New York City around the mid 1970s. Hip hop has thrived within the subculture of black and Puerto Rican communities in New York and earned widespread exposure beginning in the 1980s. At that time hip hop culture spread to the UK, Korea, France and Brazil.

Hip hop dance began in this era, with separate styles developing in New York and on the west coast. Dancers, later known as “break-boys” or “b-boys,” would perform what was known as breaking during the instrumental breaks in a song. Breaking started out strictly as top rock, footwork oriented dance moves performed while standing up, and uprock. Uprock is an aggressive form of top rock involving fancy footwork, shuffles, hitting motions and movements that mimic fighting. From toprock, breaking progressed to being more floor oriented involving head spins, windmills and swipes.

Around the same time break dancing began hitting the streets of New York, within the black communities of California a style of dance known as pop-locking also began to take form, which includes strutting, moonwalking, waving and angular robot-like contortions of the body. In locking a dancer holds their position for a long time in a freeze or a sudden pause, alternating between dancing and locking in place. Popping is based on the technique of quickly contracting and relaxing muscles to cause a jerk in the dancer’s body—referred to as a pop or a hit. Each hit is synchronized to the rhythm and beat of the music.

These new dance moves came about with the formation of crews—groups of street dancers who got together and created dance routines. Crews are comparable to ballet/contemporary dance companies but without the formalities, rehearsing in homes and on the street. Hip hop dance differs from other forms of dance in that it is freestyle or improvisational in nature and that hip hop dancers frequently engage in “battles”—formal or informal freestyle dance competitions.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: BRAZILIAN CULTURE

Brazil boasts a diverse population of indigenous peoples, Portuguese, Afro-Brazilians, and European and Asian immigrants. The cultures and heritages of these different groups characterize the spirit and liveliness of Brazil today.

It is estimated that 200 indigenous societies exist in Brazil. In the days of colonization, many indigenous people were forced to work in plantations and mines. They also guided many of the colonists into the interior parts of Brazil. Today indigenous populations have a tremendous impact on Brazilian culture and often come together with Afro-Brazilians and other Brazilians for celebrations.

In 1500, Portuguese explorer Pedro Alvares Cabral and his fleet of 13 ships and 1,200 crewmen set sail from Lisbon in hopes of arriving in India but landed on the coast of Brazil instead. Upon returning to Portugal, Cabral informed King João III of his findings; in 1531 the king sent the first colonists to Brazil. These colonists, including sailors, nobles, affluent and provincial people, soon discovered the land and climate were ideal for growing sugar cane, which was the main export until the 18th century when gold was discovered.

In the days of colonization, millions of Africans were brought to Brazil as slaves; they were forced to work on sugar plantations and in mines alongside indigenous people. While slavery in Brazil ended in 1888, African culture and heritage has since influenced almost every aspect of Brazil—from cuisine, to music, dance and art. Today, African culture is most prominent in the region known as Bahia, located in northeast Brazil.

Rio de Janeiro is the second-largest city in Brazil and is known for its beaches, its rich cultural heritage and football (soccer), as well as for the drugs and crime in the city’s favelas. Favela is usually translated as “slum,” and refers to heavily populated, informally organized urban areas with high levels of poverty and lacking public services. Recently, the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics have increased international scrutiny of crime and violence in these neighborhoods.
CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: (CONT.)

MUSIC
Music and dance are key elements of Brazilian culture as seen in Carnaval and other traditions and holidays. The music and dance of Brazil is as diverse and varied as its inhabitants. As colonists, immigrants and slaves came to Brazil, they brought with them their rhythms, sounds, instruments and movements. The indigenous people, many living deep within the Brazilian forests, have a variety of instruments including rattles, drums, whistles, flutes and horns. When the Portuguese arrived they brought many European instruments like the flute, clarinet, guitar, violin, accordion, cello, tambourine, piano and a four-stringed guitar; vocal music such as ballads, romantic songs, church music, children's songs and lullabies; and European notation, scores and harmonies. African musical influence is also very strong in Brazil as many slaves kept their musical heritage alive while working in the plantations.

HIP HOP
The Brazilian hip hop scene is considered to be the second biggest in the world, after the United States. In the late 1970s, Brazilian Bailes Black, or Black Parties, featured American funk and soul music, and tens of thousands of Afro-Brazilians attended these dance parties as an expression of their identity. The scene evolved in the 1980s and local MCs, break dancers and rappers began performing and incorporating elements of other Brazilian musical traditions. Brazilian hip hop is heavily associated with racial and economic issues in the country, incorporating politics, poverty, discrimination and other social and political issues.

SAMBA
Samba is the best known style of music from Brazil, with a dance of the same name, that arose in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Former slaves came from the Brazilian state of Bahia in the late 1800s to live in the favelas, and brought with them the traditional samba de roda or dance circle. Samba is closely associated with the celebration of Carnaval, during which an escola de samba (samba school) made up of hundreds or thousands of dancers and musicians participate in the annual festival. These schools are actually more like clubs that teach samba as a folk art handed down from generation to generation. Today, samba is Brazil’s national dance, and a fusion of its many influential cultures: indigenous peoples, Portuguese colonists and Africans.
CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: CAPOEIRA

Capoeira (Kah-PWEAR-ah) is a martial art form that combines acrobatic and dance elements which are categorized as attack or avoidance movements. Two people “play” capoeira by battling each other through a series of kicks, flips, jumps, turns and sweeps while surrounded by a circle of spectators and musicians. Usually the opponents do not actually make physical contact with each other, as the focus is not on destroying your opponent. Instead, they prefer to show the movement without completing it to enforce their superiority in the match. It is as much about cleverness and wit as it is physical ability.

Capoeira traveled with the Atlantic slave trade to Brazil, where legend holds that it was used by the Africans to fight slavery and oppression in their new home. Slaves were not permitted to train or to fight, nor were they allowed to practice any elements of their culture. Therefore, many elements had to be disguised so as to fool slave owners. It is believed that they disguised their training and fighting movements with dance movements as a way to secretly practice their martial art, transmit their culture and lift their spirits. It became an outlawed art, punishable by death; but in the Brazilian war against Paraguay in the 1860’s, the government recognized the fighting skills of capoeiristas and asked them to serve as front-line troops. After the abolition of slavery in Brazil, capoeira was widely practiced as a martial art, and its movements slowly modified into a form of dance. Now it is recognized as a common dance form and a national sport. Both employ the same graceful, quick movements, simulating the blows and parries of “the fight” in time with the rhythms of music. Music, comprised of instruments and vocals, is integral to both forms of capoeira in that it sets the tempo and the style of the game.

VOCABULARY

Absolute: viewed independently; not comparative or relative
Carnaval: a season of public revelry in the week before Lent in predominantly Roman Catholic countries, featuring music, dance, masquerade and parades
Colonization: the establishment of a colony in one territory by a political power from another territory
Favela: a shantytown or slum area in or near a city, especially in Brazil
Improvisational: having been created by composing, executing, or arranging without previous preparation
Indigenous: originating in a particular region or country; native
Relative: existing or having its specific nature only by relation to something else; not absolute or independent
LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

MOVEMENT VOCABULARY: GRADES 6-12
Divide students into groups of three or four. Have the groups choose a topic they wish to represent in movement. Ideas could include: walking someplace where you don’t feel safe, eating a delicious meal, falling down on a patch of ice, getting caught at something you aren’t supposed to be doing, keeping a secret, etc. Have each individual within the smaller group create a shape, gesture or position to make with their body that reflects the theme in some way. Have each individual teach their motion to the others in their group. Each group should find a way to connect each individual’s contribution, by moving from one position into another, so that each dance ‘word’ is connected into one longer ‘phrase’ or ‘sentence’ of movement.

Give each group an opportunity to present to the rest of the class, without using any words. Have the audience describe what they saw, and what they think the small group was trying to represent. Have the group of three students share what they were representing, and how they felt their movements showcased the event, feeling or theme. Could the audience pick out the individual words from the phrase? Did the phrase represent a change (in time, emotion, character) or was it one unified representation of the theme?

Extension: This activity can be adapted for many contexts as a way to harness students’ kinesthetic intelligence. Rather than choosing from a random collection of ideas to express through movement, explore themes in literature, scientific concepts or leadership skills by creating movement phrases that express key ideas.

PERCEPTION VS. REALITY: GRADES 6-12
Pose the question to your class: what are the stereotypes of your community? Think in small terms—your school, your street, your village—as well as larger ones—your state, your country. What are the stereotypes of people who live in each of these geographic areas? Make a list as a class of stereotypes that could apply to you based on where you live. Has anyone ever felt the effects of one of these stereotypes? As a class, discuss the negative effects of stereotypes. Think of what positive impact they might have. How do stereotypes shape the way we think about ourselves and our identities? How does it affect the way we see the world? Now think about the people you know personally. Think of an example of someone you know who defies each of the stereotypes you have listed. How could that person change someone’s perception of a stereotype?

Extension: Ask each student to pick one stereotype to focus on, along with an example of someone who does not fit the mold. Choose a creative way to share that story. Students might create a poster, a video, write a short story or create a movement piece that demonstrates the power of defying stereotypes.

STORY OF MY LIFE: GRADES 8-12
In pairs, ask students to share with their partner the “story of their life” as they see it. Give each student 5-10 minutes to share stories about their family, where they’ve lived, how they spend their free time, what they’ve excelled or struggled with in school and anything else they feel comfortable sharing. Each partner should listen to the story and analyze it as though it is a work of literature. What character traits does the teller exude? What is the essential or most dramatic moment? What ideas or themes are repeated in the story? After hearing the feedback from their partner, have students pick one theme that they feel represents the story of their life. Quickly jot down how they relate to the theme, their personal anecdotes that relate, and why they think this idea is important. Looking over their notes, pick 3 or 4 words that stand out as the most representative of the theme.

Ask students to explore the theme in an artistic medium that makes the most sense for your class and each student’s comfort level. Students might turn their writing into a story or narrative memoir. Others may want to share their writing as spoken word poetry or interpret it in movement or visual art. Showcase the completed works to the class and reflect as a group about what you have learned. What similarities and differences showed up among the students? What did you learn about one of your classmates? Did you see influences from popular culture, formal art or local folk traditions in the presentations? How often in your local or school culture do you hear the personal stories of your peers?
PRE PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Companhia Urbana de Dança has only one female dancer among eight male dancers. Have you ever been the only girl in a group of boys, or vice versa, in an activity? How did it feel? At your school or in your community, what activities are primarily for girls, or for boys? Who makes the decision to segregate by gender? Do you think it’s a good idea?

- What is culture? What is the difference between youth culture and adult culture? Where do you see youth culture in your community? Do you think adult culture overpowers youth culture, or vice versa?

- What are some ideas and expressions that are valued in US and Western culture that are not valued in Asian, African or other non-western cultures? What are some things you have seen in non-western culture that you find strange or unattractive? Why do you think people in different parts of the world value different modes of expression? Do you think beauty is an absolute term that can be applied equally for all people, or relative to the situation?

POST PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What kind of music did you hear in the performance? How does it compare to hip hop you hear on the radio or in videos? How did the dancing in Na Pista compare to hip hop dancing in music videos you have seen?

- What were the other dancers doing while one or two dancers performed? How did one or two people dancing compare to the entire group dancing together? Why do you think they took turns dancing?

- How would Na Pista be different if it were performed on the street in an urban area instead of a theater? How would people in the audience react differently? Do you think this performance is better suited for performance in a theater or on the street? What elements might be able to fit in both environments?

- When did the performance resemble capoeira more than hip hop? Did it appear in certain situations?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Companhia Urbana de Dança
https://vimeo.com/user8151794
Hip-Hop curriculum with activities
Favela Rising – Documentary film by Jeff Zimbalist and Matt Mochary
http://www.favelarising.com/
Interview with Sonia Destri Lie
http://www.timeout.com/newyork/dance/q-a-sonia-destri-lie-talks-about-her-vision-behind-companhia-urbana-de-danca
http://www.hiphopcongress.com/
http://www.hiphoparchive.org/
http://www.daveyd.com/historyphysicalgrafittifabel.html

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