



FULL CIRCLE PRODUCTIONS: HIP-HOP TO DA HEAD

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

11 a.m.-12 p.m. ET

Grades 7-12

When viewing *Full Circle Productions: Hip-Hop to da Head* and participating in this guide's suggested activities, the following National Standards for Dance will be addressed: 3, 5, 6, 7.

Program Notes

What is Hip-Hop?

Full Circle Productions is a company of artists who create hip-hop together. Hip-hop is a performance art form created by combining music, spoken word, dance, and graffiti art.

The Four Elements of Hip-Hop

Deejaying

Before people listened to music on compact discs, they used record albums, played on a record player, or turntable. Someone who played records for others was called a disc jockey, or deejay.

In the late 1970s and early 80s, a deejay in the Bronx named Kool Herc noticed that dancers liked the breaks in the music, or the percussion solos. He began experimenting with making the breaks in the music longer, which allowed the dancers more time to create new moves, like dropping to the floor and popping up again. The dance was called break dancing and dancers were called b-boys and b-girls.

Deejays continued to innovate. Some began "scratching" the needle on the record, some played one record over the sound of another, and others cut back and forth between records. Deejays created a new electronic form of music by combining elements from different recordings and by manipulating sounds rhythmically.

Emceeing or Rapping

The word emcee comes from the term "Master of Ceremonies," the person who organizes an event. Hip-hop emcees began by commenting on a deejay's skills. Gradually the emcees experimented with adding spoken word, often with a political or social message, on top of the music the deejays created. Eventually emcees were called rappers, and the rhymes they spoke to a musical beat was called rap.

Dancing, B-boys and B-girls

In response to the music, dancers created a whole vocabulary of movement. Some of the moves you will see in *Hip-Hop to da Head* include:

- Power Moves—spinning moves, like backspins and headspins
- Freeze—stopping and holding an interesting position, often balancing on the shoulder, head, or hands
- The Tick—body movement that is mechanical like a robot; movements start and stop with a shake
- Popping—creating body illusions (with moves like an ocean wave) or glides (where the feet look like they are gliding across the floor)
- Locking—repeatedly letting the body move or collapse as if the dancer doesn't have control, and then snapping the body back into a held position

Grffiti Art

Grffiti artists use spray paint to make public statements. Grffiti began as a way to make political comments and as a way to mark territory. Later, graffiti artists and writers competed to see who could write their name, or "tag," the most times and in the most interesting ways.

Elements of the Performance

Hip-hop grew out of an urban environment. Deejays, emcees, and dancers performed in clubs, or for one another on the street. Today, hip-hop music and dance is performed on the concert stage.

Hip-Hop to da Head is a performance made for the stage with theatrical elements added, including lighting and projected photography. Some of the performers tell stories about the challenges of living in a big city like New York. Others tell stories about the difficulties they experienced growing up.

Hip-hop began in the African American and Latino communities, but has spread to include all races and colors. *Hip-Hop to da Head* includes elements of Hispanic culture in their stage performance. Watch for the fast hips and quick footwork of Latin dance. Also watch for the up and down motion of the head, torso, and arms common in types of African dance.

Hip-hop artists wear casual clothes. The dancers often wear long pants, shirts, and hats to be able to perform power moves, and shoes for control and safety.

Who is Full Circle?

Full Circle was started by two dancers, Gabriel “Kwikstep” Dionisio and his wife Anita “Rockafella” Garcia.

Kwikstep was born and raised in New York City, and began dancing at the age of 8. He performed for President Clinton, and has traveled the world performing as a hip-hop dancer.

Rockafella was born in Spanish Harlem to Puerto Rican parents. She began dancing at age 16. Besides hip-hop, she likes African and salsa dance, and hopes that girls will be inspired to dance after seeing the women in the show. She sings and rhymes with a group called “The Orphans,” is a published poet, and also works as an actress. She has worked with such artists as Will Smith and Mariah Carey.

Both Kwikstep and Rockafella hope their audiences realize that it is possible to make a career out of an artistic discipline if one works hard and is willing to take risks. Full Circle Productions reaches out to young people, celebrates diversity, and shows that hip-hop is a positive outlet for creativity.

Instructional Activities

Rap It Up!

Many rappers began by making short rhymes about themselves or their friends, like:
“Bradley D is in the house And he’ll turn it out without a doubt”

Create your own rhyme, 2-6 lines long, using your name or that of a friend. Perform your rap for your class.

Internet Resources

For more information, visit:

FullCircleSoul.com

npr.org/programs/morning/features/patc/breakdancing/bboy.org



Full Circle Productions

What to Look and Listen for

- The way the deejay manipulates the music he plays. Can you hear repeated sounds? Scratches? Watch how fast his hands move as he performs.
- Break dance moves by the dancers. You will see them spin on their backs or shoulders in a power move, and then hit a freeze.
- Spoken word, or rapping, by the emcee. You will also hear “beat boxing,” a specialized vocalization that sounds like drum beats, but is created by using the voice.