

PRESS RELEASE

BALLETROX PRESENTS

Anthony Williams' *URBAN NUTCRACKER*

The Holiday Dance Classic But with an Inner-City Edge

Dec. 10, 11, 17 & 18 at 2:00 PM and Dec. 17 at 7:30 PM

The Strand Theatre, Dorchester, MA

Urban Nutcracker presents a multicultural interpretation of the dance classic, performed by professional dancers and a cast reflective of the rich diversity & promise of Boston's youth. *Urban Nutcracker* follows the story line of the 19th century fairy tale fusing ballet, swing, hip hop, and urban tap with the classical score of Tchaikovsky and the pulsating beat of Ellington.

By casting dancers from multi-ethnic backgrounds, *Urban Nutcracker* provides the audience with an invaluable opportunity to bridge cultural barriers. Designed to push beyond traditional interpretations and therefore beyond the traditional audience reach of the holiday classic, *Urban Nutcracker* will inspire a new generation of dance enthusiasts/theater patrons!

Dancers include former Boston Ballet ballerina **Adriana Suárez** and her partner **Gianni Di Marco** as well as former Cuban National Ballet ballerina **Ana Lobe** along with **Ramon Thielen & Duncan Cooper** of the Dance Theatre of Harlem and **over 50 area children**.

2005 PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Rebecca Cross weaves her magic with stunningly, beautiful set designs and costumes. To celebrate the occasion of its **fifth anniversary**, more holiday magic has been added with new choreography and performers. Experience the:

- Beauty and grace of **Adriana Suárez**, former principal dancer with Boston Ballet, as she headlines the cast of *Urban Nutcracker* as the *Sugar Plum Fairy* (Dec. 11 & 18).
- Energy of **A Chosen Few** as they perform a type of step dancing popular in African-American sororities & fraternities but with roots in South African, gumboot dancing.
- Pure rush of **Ricardo Foster's** hip hop and acrobatic version of the Russian dance.
- Soothing melodies of **VariAsians**, an Asian-American a cappella group.

URBAN NUTCRACKER DANCERS

Debuting in the role of the *Sugar Plum Fairy* (12/11 & 12/18) is international ballet sensation **Adriana Suárez**, a former, principal dancer with Boston Ballet. Ms. Suárez's lead roles include *Sleeping Beauty*, *Giselle*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Taming of the Shrew*. Performing with Ms. Suárez is her partner and former Boston Ballet dancer, **Gianni Di Marco**. He has danced numerous lead roles in *Giselle*, *The Nutcracker*, *Don Quixote*, and *Le Corsaire*.

Returning for a second year in the role of the *Sugar Plum Fairy* (12/17) is **Ana Lobe**, a former principal dancer with the Cleveland Ballet and a protégé of Alicia Alonso with the National Ballet of Cuba. Her partner, **Ramon Thielen**, of the Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH), returns for a third year in the role as the *Cavalier*. He has toured extensively as a guest artist with leading roles in *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

Duncan Cooper, of the DTH and formerly of the San Francisco Ballet, debuts as the *Snow Prince* and *Branch*. His credits include *The Prodigal Son*, *Swan Lake*, and *Sleeping Beauty*.

Other notable dancers returning to this year's production are: **Michael Shannon**, MD, MPH, Chief of Emergency Medicine at Children's Hospital. Michael will appear as *Drosselmeyer* for his fifth year! **Yo-el Cassell**, cast in the title role of Julie Taymor's (Lion King fame) upcoming Broadway production of *Pinocchio*, dances the role of *Minimeyer*.

Other performers include **Khalid Hill**, tap choreographer, who danced in Savion Glover's Broadway smash *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk*. **Liem Nguyen**, a break dancer, who spins on his head as well as his elbow and wrist. **Ricardo Foster**, hip hop choreographer, who has shared the stage with Run DMC and Usher.

Rounding out the cast is a corps of young professionals from the Dance Theatre of Harlem, the Boston Conservatory, Festival Ballet, and Island Moving Company. Finally, more than 50 children, from the JP School of Dance, Walnut Hill, and other dance schools will also take the stage together, reflecting the rich spirit and potential of Boston's varied communities.

ANTHONY WILLIAMS - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Anthony Williams, founder of BalletRox, is of mixed race heritage (African-American/Italian). He was born in Naples, Italy and raised in Jamaica Plain and Roxbury. He spent his formative years (age 8 through 18) living in the Bromley-Heath housing project in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts.

After experiencing trouble as a street gang member, he discovered a way out through ballet. He received a scholarship from the Boston School of Ballet, which led to a successful career as a professional, international ballet dancer.

He worked his way up from corps-de-ballet to principal with such companies as Boston Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Gulbenkian Ballet, and the Norwegian Ballet.

Anthony remembers how his early exposure to dance opened up a treasure of self-expression that was hidden to him at that time. Ballet gave him the confidence to take on the challenge of an exciting new career; offering him the necessary tools to make a successful transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Having benefited so greatly from the gift of dance, Mr. Williams now strives to give back to Boston, Boston's youth, and Boston's under-served communities a gift in kind. This gift is BalletRox – a scholarship based school and ballet company that provides community-focused, affordable, and high quality dance education as well as professional theatrical productions.

As founder and director of BalletRox, Mr. Williams demonstrates to Boston's children that no matter who they are, how they look, or what their background, they can through hard work and dedication someday see in themselves – as Mr. Williams has seen in himself – a professional dancer, entrepreneur, teacher, civic leader, and role model.

VENUE & TICKETS

The Strand Theatre, 543 Columbia Road in Dorchester, is accessible via the Red Line to Andrew station or the Orange Line to Forest Hills station, then the #16 (Forest Hills) bus to Upham's Corner/Dudley Street. Get off in front of Payless Shoesource. The Strand is one block on the left, just past Bank of America. The theater is **wheelchair accessible** and there is on-street parking as well as off-street parking in the municipal lot behind Payless Shoesource.

Tickets are \$15, \$20, \$29, & \$35. They are available at:

- www.ticketweb.com or toll free at 866-468-7619
- The Strand Theatre Box Office at Upham's Corner in Dorchester or at 617-635-1408
- Nubian Notions at Dudley Square in Roxbury or at 617-442-4425

For additional information about the *Urban Nutcracker*, please visit www.urban-nutcracker.com or call (617) 524-3066.

CALENDAR LISTING

Anthony Williams' *URBAN NUTCRACKER*

Dec. 10, 11, 17 & 18 at 2:00 PM & Dec. 17 at 7:30 PM

The Strand Theatre, Dorchester, MA

Anthony Williams' *Urban Nutcracker* (www.urban-nutcracker.com) is a celebration of the holiday classic but with an inner-city edge. Set in contemporary Boston, *Urban Nutcracker* presents a multicultural interpretation of the 19th century fairy tale fusing ballet, swing, hip hop, and urban tap with the classical score of Tchaikovsky and the pulsating beat of Ellington. *Urban Nutcracker* features former Boston Ballet ballerina **Adriana Suárez** and partner **Gianni Di Marco** as well as former Cuban National Ballet ballerina **Ana Lobe** and **Ramon Thielen** of the Dance Theatre of Harlem along with over **50 area children**.

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For interviews with Anthony Williams, please contact Tamara Nikuradse via e-mail at Nikuradse@aol.com or phone at 781-789-3485. Photos (300 DPI) of the Urban Nutcracker can be downloaded at www.metlicka.com/un04.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

Anthony Williams and dancers are available for phone interviews. The media is invited to preview *Urban Nutcracker* as a work-in-progress at a dress rehearsal, experience the finished work at a matinee performance on **Sunday, December 11th at 2 PM**, and/or talk with Mr. Williams and dancers in person. We hope you will attend at least one of the *Urban Nutcracker* performances. For more information or comp tickets, please contact **Tamara Nikuradse** at Nikuradse@aol.com or 781-789-3485.

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