

# PRESS RELEASE

## BALLETROX PRESENTS

### Anthony Williams's *URBAN NUTCRACKER*

The Holiday Dance Classic with an Inner-City Edge

*Dec. 9, 10, 16 & 17 at 1:30pm and*

*Dec. 8, 9, 14, 15 & 16 at 7:30pm*

*John Hancock Hall, Boston, 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, flamenco 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 renowned flamenco dancer **Isaac de los Reyes** making his *Urban Nutcracker* debut in a dance duet with *Urban Nutcracker* star, **Khalid Hill**, an original dancer in *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in the 'Da Funk*.

Isaac de los Reyes, eldest son of dancers and choreographers Ramón de los Reyes and Clara Ramona, has been professionally dancing since the age of 13. Raised in Dorchester, Isaac moved to Madrid, Spain, where he has become a flamenco star. He last appeared in Boston in 2003 in his original work *Hombres Flamencos*.

Every year in the *Urban Nutcracker*, the prologue is a vibrant mix of dance styles and music, including live drumming and doo wop singing. In this year's production, a highlight is the riveting dance face-off between Isaac, with his intricate flamenco footwork, and the brilliant tapping of Khalid Hill. Each one tries to top the other in an accelerating battle of the feet, culminating in a coda of heart-thumping excitement.

This opening scene sets the stage for a *Nutcracker* like you've never seen before!

## 2006 PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

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

\* Energy of **A Chosen Few Inc.** as they perform step dancing popular in African-American sororities & fraternities but with roots in South African, gumboot dancing.

\* **Ramon Thielen**, born in Caracas, Venezuela and formerly of the Dance Theater of Harlem, visits us again from New York

\* We have an outstanding cast that includes seasoned professionals, students at the **Boston Conservatory** and over **50 children and teenagers**

## URBAN NUTCRACKER DANCERS

**Ramon Thielen**, of the Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH), returns for a fourth year in the role of Cavalier. He has toured extensively as a guest artist with leading roles in *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. **Mifa Ko**, born in Tokyo, studied with the Matsuyama Ballet School. She also trained at the Académie de Dance Classique Princess Grace in Monte Carlo, the Bolshoi Ballet in Russia, and the Boston Ballet School, where she had the opportunity to perform with the company in *The Nutcracker*. Ms. Ko has appeared as a guest artist performing leading roles in several full-length ballets including *Swan Lake*, *Nutcracker*, *Romeo & Juliet* and *Giselle*. Ms. Ko is a fellow of the Mc Knight Foundation's prestigious Dancers Award for 2006.

Other notable dancers returning to this year's production are: **Michael Shannon**, MD, MPH, Chief of Emergency Medicine at Children's Hospital. Dr. Shannon will appear as Drosselmeyer for his sixth year! **Yo-el Cassell**, cast in the title role of Julie Taymor's (*Lion King* fame) upcoming Broadway production of *Gepetto and Son*, dances the role of Minimeyer. **Jack Luceno**, double for *Kramer* on the Seinfeld T.V. show, returns as Kramer in Act I, in this hilarious role.

**Doo-woppers** are all original members of the various vocal groups that existed in Roxbury during that era and through the mid-seventies, including the G-Clefs, C-Quinns, Ambitious, and Indigos.

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**, New England break dancing champion, who spins on his head as well as his elbow and wrist.

Rounding out the cast is a corps of young professionals from the **Dance Theatre of Harlem, Island Moving Company** and the **Boston Conservatory**. Finally, **more than 50 children**, from the JP School of Dance, Walnut Hill, West Roxbury School of Dance 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 (ages 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

### **John Hancock Hall at Back Bay Events Center**

180 Berkeley St., Boston

**Tickets** are \$20, \$32 and \$40. They are available at:

[www.ticketfusion.com](http://www.ticketfusion.com) or toll free at 877-548-3237

Back Bay Events Center Box Office, 180 Berkeley St. (beginning Nov. 13.)

For additional information about the Urban Nutcracker, please visit [www.balletrox.org](http://www.balletrox.org) or call (617) 524-3066.

### **Directions**

#### **By MBTA**

Back Bay Events Center is located within blocks of several MBTA stations. Visit [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com).

**Back Bay Station:** servicing Commuter Rail, and the Orange Line. Located on Dartmouth Street between Stuart Street and Columbus Avenue, and on Clarendon Street near Columbus Avenue.

**Copley Square Station:** servicing the Green Line. Located at 640 Boylston Street and 230 Dartmouth Street.

**Arlington Street Station:** servicing the Green Line. Located at 300 Boylston Street and 20 Arlington Street.

#### **By Car**

From the North (I-93 South or Rt. 1 South)

Take the Storrow Drive exit off Interstate 93. Follow signs for Copley Square. Take the Copley Square exit and turn right onto Beacon Street. Drive two blocks and turn left onto Clarendon Street. Drive six blocks and turn left onto Stuart Street. The facility is located one block ahead on the left at the corner of Berkeley and Stuart Streets.

From the South (I-93 North)

Take exit 18 (Mass. Ave.) off Interstate 93. Stay to the left, following signs for Frontage Road — about 600 yards after exit. Follow Frontage Road, staying to the left, through the intersection/entrance to the Ted Williams Tunnel. Follow signs for South End/Back Bay, bearing left onto East Berkeley Street. Continue on East Berkeley Street to Columbus Ave. onto Berkeley Street. The facility is located one block ahead on the left at the corner of Berkeley and Stuart Streets.

From the West (Mass Turnpike / I-90 East)

Take the Copley Square exit, following signs for Copley Square. You will come to street level onto Stuart Street. Continue on Stuart Street. The facility is located three blocks ahead on the left at the corner of Berkeley and Stuart Streets.

### **Parking**

Validated\* parking for the Back Bay Events Center is located one block from the facility at the [Garage @ 100 Clarendon](#).

\*Back Bay Events Center will validate parking for all shows. The discount is as follows: \$10.00 rate when entering the garage before 5:00 pm. \$6.00 rate when entering the garage after 5:00 pm.

## MEDIA INQUIRIES

Anthony Williams and dancers are available for interviews. The media is invited to preview *Urban Nutcracker* as a work-in-progress at a dress rehearsal Thursday, December 7 at 7 PM. Media passes are available also. For more information or complimentary tickets, please contact BalletRox at (617) 524-3066. Photos (300 DPI) of the Urban Nutcracker can be downloaded at [www.metlicka.com/un05](http://www.metlicka.com/un05).