



A Reading of A Christmas Carol

Tuesday, December 18, 7pm at Omni Parker House
a benefit for Rosie's Place.

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WBUR presents
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Tapping Into "Urban Nutcracker"

By [Andrea Shea](#)

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BOSTON, Mass. - December 14, 2007 - You can count on a few cultural chestnuts each holiday season: "The Grinch"... "It's a Wonderful Life"...and, on stages all around the world..."The Nutcracker."

In Boston, a local company is staging its unconventional take on the traditional ballet for the seventh year. In this season's "Urban Nutcracker," there's a new turn...and some twisting too.

As WBUR's Andrea Shea reports, the show features a face-off between a Spanish flamenco star and a rising tapper from Mattapan.

Audio for this story will be available on WBUR's web site later today.

Sound of school kids in audience

ANDREA SHEA: Over the course of its two-week run hundreds of Boston-area school children come to see 'The Urban Nutcracker.' Back stage dancers, technicians and production staff scramble to prep the show. Sean Figueroa says he's been working 'behind-the-scenes' in Boston theaters for years.

SEAN FIGUEROA: I've done many Nutcrackers, I've done more Nutcracker shows than I can count honestly and this is definitely the most unique. Usually it's always your traditional classical ballet one, this is the only one that really stands out this dramatically and it's a nice change.

Music from Tchaikovsky's 'Nutcracker'

ANDREA SHEA: While tinsel, tutus and Tchaikovsky play a major role in 'The Urban Nutcracker'...Anthony Williams...the show's founder and Artistic director...says his audiences are in for much more.

ANTHONY WILLIAMS: They'll see hip hop they'll see Turkish folk dance, they'll see jump roping...

ANDREA SHEA: They'll also see tap.

Sound of tapping

ANDREA SHEA: And flamenco.

Sound of flamenco dancing

ANDREA SHEA: Last year Williams incorporated a 'face-off' into the show...between a flamenco dancer and an urban tapper.

ANTHONY WILLIAMS: I wanted to do it as 2 kids in the hood, walking down the street, they bump into each other and 'hey are you dissing me or what?' And then they sort of start to talk and they talk with their feet.

Tap and flamenco

ANTHONY WILLIAMS: At first they dance separately like, 'oh I'm doing my thing.' And then they start to morph into each other like, 'oh I kind of like that rhythm.



"Urban Nutcracker" is in its 7th year. (Photo by Petr Metlicka)

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More dancing

ANTHONY WILLIAMS: And then we just be ourselves, you know, and we're having fun, more than a battle it's having fun, you know?

ANDREA SHEA:
Flamenco artist Isaac Des Los Reyes grew up in Dorchester and Reading, but he's been living in Spain for the last 17 years, where he dances professionally. He flew to Boston for the 'face-off' with tapper Sean Fielder.

ISAAC DES LOS REYES: It's so easy to dance with him because he's a really good artist and we improvise everything and it's like, I don't know how it can be so easy, to mix two different arts. I think it's natural.

ANDREA SHEA: Des Los Reyes is a heart throb back in Spain. The young audience here in Boston goes crazy for both dancers during this performance. But Gonca Somnez-Poole, a documentarian who's been following 'The Urban Nutcracker' this season....says the kids here see something of themselves on stage.

GONCA SOMNEZ-POOLE: We're looking at a street scene, they're like in sweat pants, this is a whole other deal here and then they see Sean and he looks like the guy around the corner but look at him, he's getting a lot of applause and that's because he stuck to it, he was given a chance, and he's working hard and they love him.

ANDREA SHEA: Fielder grew up in Mattapan and says his life is all about tapping.

SEAN FIELDER: Started dancing when I was 3 at the Roxbury Center for the Performing Arts over in Dorchester and have been tapping for just about all my life.

ANDREA SHEA: Fielder performed the lead role in the first national tour of 'Bring in da' Noise, bring in da' Funk.' Currently the twenty-something dancer teaches at various schools around Boston.

SEAN FIELDER: Tap for me has made me feel real tired, it makes me feel like an old man (laughs)...no it's given me a stronger sense of music...most tappers we feel like we're musicians cause our instruments are on the bottom of our feet. In order to make music we have to dance, so that it's a dance but at the same time it's like a musical form disguised in a form of dance.

ANDREA SHEA: And Fielder is trying to bring that form of dance to other inner-city kids. He recently founded the non-profit Boston Tap Company.

SEAN FIELDER: My main focus is reaching out to kids and letting them know that you can do this, it's work, but you can do this and you can learn a lot about it, not just about yourself but about other people, other backgrounds, other cultures, just like how we the face-off in the show with the flamenco and tap, it's 2 different cultures, it's 2 different backgrounds but when they come together you can see the similarities.

ANDREA SHEA: Fielders learning a lot about the business-side of running a dance company from Anthony Williams. He founded BalletRox, which supports 'The Urban Nutcracker.'

ANTHONY WILLIAMS: He's already asking me, 'gee, how do you establish a board of directors and get the incorporation papers and all this and I said oh I'll be able to tell you all about that stuff, so in a way I guess I'm in the role of mentor, I guess we just have to pass it on.

ANDREA SHEA: This weekend Sean Fielder, Isaac Des Los Reyes...and the rest of the dancers and crew behind 'The Urban Nutcracker' will pass their art on to audiences who brave the snow to see their final performances of the year.

For WBUR I'm Andrea Shea.

Music from the performance: Duke Ellington's take on 'The Nutcracker'

"Urban Nutcracker" finishes its two-week run at the John Hancock Hall on Sunday. For information about the show, click on the link below.

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**Tapping Into "Urban Nutcracker"**

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