EPHRAT ASHERIE DANCE

UNDERSCORED

Study Guide

CHOREOGRAPHER: EPHRAT ASHERIE, IN COLLABORATION WITH EPHRAT ASHERIE DANCE
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theatre Etiquette</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAD Company Bio</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephrat Asherie Bio</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Credits</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About <em>UNDERSCORED</em></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club Legend Bios</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of the NYC Club Scene</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity: Rhythm Circle</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity: Find the Rhythm in Your Name</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing in a Global Pandemic</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources/Further Reading</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theatre Etiquette

If you are attending a performance of UNDERSCORED, it is important to remember a few common practices of theatre etiquette.

1. Leave your food, drinks and gum in your classroom.

2. Turn off all electronics. An unexpected beep or ring in the middle of the performance will distract the audience members and the performers!

3. Be respectful of your teachers, the performers, and your classmates. The experience should be enjoyable for everyone!

4. Open your eyes, ears, and heart to the whole experience and enjoy the performance!

A NOTE FROM

EPHRAT:

For this performance, please feel free to hoot, holler, and make noise whenever you feel moved to! We love to interact with our audiences.
Ephrat Asherie Dance (EAD) is a dance company rooted in Black and Latinx vernacular dance. Dedicated to exploring the inherent complexities of various street and club dances, including breaking, hip-hop, house, and vogue, EAD investigates the expansive narrative qualities of these forms as a means to tell stories, develop innovative imagery, and find new modes of expression. EAD’s first evening-length work, A Single Ride, earned two Bessie nominations in 2013 for Outstanding Emerging Choreographer and Outstanding Sound Design by Marty Beller. The company has presented work at Apollo Theater, Columbia College, Dixon Place, FiraTarrega, Works & Process at the Guggenheim, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, the Joyce Theater, La MaMa, River to River Festival, New York Live Arts, Summerstage, and The Yard, among others.
Ephrat “Bounce” Asherie is a New York City-based b-girl, performer, choreographer, and director and a 2016 Bessie Award Winner for Innovative Achievement in Dance. Asherie has received numerous awards to support her work, including Dance Magazine’s Harkness Promise Award, a Jacob’s Pillow Fellowship at the Tilles Center, and a National Dance Project Award. She is a 2021-2022 Jerome Hill Artist Fellow. As artistic director of EAD, Asherie’s work has been presented at ArtPower at UC San Diego, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, the Joyce Theater, and Works & Process at the Guggenheim, among others. She is honored to have been mentored by Richard Santiago (a.k.a. “Break Easy”) and to have worked and collaborated with Buddha Stretch, Bill Irwin, Michelle Dorrance, Doug Elkins, Gus Solomons Jr., and Rennie Harris. Asherie is a co-founding member of the all-female house dance collective MAWU and is forever grateful to New York City’s underground dance community for inspiring her to pursue a life as an artist.
Additional Credits

**Costumes:** David Dalrymple  
**Additional Styling:** Archie Burnett, Michele Saunders and Bravo "Brahms" LaFortune  
**Original Music:** Steve Jenning and Robert Stein  
**Music:** Glenn Lewis, Nyaruach, Martin Circus, Roland Clark, L.T.D, Josh Milan  
**Mixing/Editing:** Ephrat Asherie  
**Audio Engineering:** Robert Stein  
**Original text written by** Rich Perez  
**and adapted by** Ephrat Asherie  
**Voice Recordings by** Archie Burnett, Michele Saunders, Matthew "Megawatt" West, Ephrat Asherie

**Dancers:**  
Ephrat “Bounce” Asherie  
Manon Bal  
Ron “Stealth-1” Chunn Jr.  
Teena Marie Custer  
Val “Ms. Vee” Ho  
Eriko Jimbo  
Matthew “Megawatt” West

**With Club Legends:**  
Archie Burnett  
Michele Saunders  
Louise Kee ("Loose")  
Brahms "Bravo" LaFortune
ABOUT

UNDERSCORED

Rooted in the intergenerational stories and memories of NYC underground club heads, UNDERSCORED is created in collaboration with legendary elders from the underground dance community.

The piece is inspired by stories of several seminal underground parties, including David Mancuso's the Loft, Larry Levan's Paradise Garage, and Timmy Regisford's Shelter.

The cast ranges in age from 28-76.
Archie Burnett is a highly respected underground club dancer in New York City who was one of the prime dancers during the late 70s and 80s, becoming well known for his individual freestyle of Whacking/ Waacking and Voguing. He was a close friend and assistant of the grandfather of Voguing, the legend Willi Ninja, and is up until now a striving force in the NYC dance scene. He is invited as a judge for battles, such as for the “Funkin Stylez” 2009, and is mostly directly responsible for birthing the European Vogue scene that we have today. He has appeared in the documentary film Check Your Body at the Door (2001) by Dr. Sally Sommer, (Professor of Dance at Florida State University), that explores the movement vocabulary of legendary NYC house dancers, including Archie Burnett, Willi Ninja, Ejoe Wilson, Marjory Smarth and Conrad Rochester. Made possible in part by contributions from the National Endowment of the Arts, Dr. Sommer interviews dancers from the local NYC scene and captures now-vintage footage from the late 1980s and early 1990s. Check Your Body at the Door now stands as an historical document and testament to the early years of NYC’s house dance culture. Archie has also lectured at Yale University, New York University and Boston Massachusetts University on the relevance and importance of club culture. He has taught in over 26 countries and continues to provide possibilities for the culture.
Born and raised in Paris, France, a trailblazing rebel from day one, **Michele Saunders** was always fascinated with American music—Elvis Presley, James Dean, rock ‘n roll, R&B, Motown—as well as the world of art, fashion, and film. While recuperating from a serious ski accident at 18, she decided to move to America. One year later, she started studying at Mount Holyoke College on a Fulbright Scholarship. When she moved to New York City, she also started representing some of the world’s most innovative fashion and art photographers, and illustrators, including Steve Hiett, Art Kane, David Hamilton, Jacques Malignon, Uwe Ommer, Pater Sato and Dan Rinaldi, giving Saunders a first-row seat to cutting-edge creators in the fashion industry. She also worked for years in the music industry, styling photography shoots and musical performers, including Elton John, Diana Ross, Billy Idol, Luther Vandross, Pink and others. Her love of music led to the discovery of Paradise Garage, a dance club in New York City that influenced Ms. Saunders’ life profoundly, furthering her love of dancing and the world of dance music, connecting her to DJs such as David Morales, Louie Vega and Kenny Carpenter. Through the people she met there, she befriended Patricia Field, had her son Zachary (Ms. Field is his godmother). She has collaborated on stories with the art and fashion magazine, Document, including an interview with Frankie Knuckles (the godfather of house music) by Honey Dijon. She has also worked extensively in "street casting" – the art of spotting diverse and urban fashionistas who create their own unique styles. Now 76, Ms. Saunders’ stays current and works to connect artist and creative thinkers of all kinds, helping people find their dream homes, and continuing to produce events that shine the light on Catskill.
night was a lesson in sound, attitude, and busting the right moves. Dancing to the music played by legendary DJs including: Kenny Carpenter, Timmy Regisford, David Mancouso Larry Levan, Tony Humphries, David Morales, Bravo honed his fast foot work and developed his own style. From New York City to Vienna he has danced his way into House Music history. Bravo is featured in the dance documentary Check Your Body At The Door and was the dancer for the Club/House Music classic by Strafe Set It Off. Inspired by Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, the driving beats of House Music and Busby Burkley's choreography, Bravo's style is Bravo's Style.

As a dancer/producer/ DJ/performer, Brahma "Bravo" LaFortune was intimately involved in the New York City Underground Club Scene from its inception. In the early 1980's Bravo became involved with clubbing and decided to mentally and physically dedicate himself to the scene because the lights were brighter, the people where happier and the sound systems were monstrously overwhelming. clubbing was Bravo's school and each
Louis Kee (aka Loose) was born in Queens and raised in Long Island, New York. A self-taught club dancer who started dancing in 1976, Louis is continuously inspired by various genres of music including funk, jazz, latin, disco, reggae and house. A historian of the NYC club dance scene and a mentor to many in the community, A regular at legendary seminal NYC clubs like the Loft and the Paradise Garage, Louis has danced for the Body & Soul Japan and Hong Kong tours and performed with MAWU and Afro Mosaic Soul. He has been featured in numerous books and magazines including Tim Lawrence’s Life and Death On the New York Dance Floor 1980-1983. Louis is the recipient of numerous awards that honor his years of dedication to the house dance community, including Blueprint Award (Houston, Texas), the Winter Music Conference’s Legend Award (Miami, Florida) and MAWU’s Gaurdian of Light Award for a “lifetime of mentorship, guidance,and inspiration within the NYC house community” (NYC). Louis continues to teach and share his knowledge of house dance culture with students of all ages and is still rockin the dance floor at a party near you.
Underground clubs in New York City served as community gathering places for people of all races, classes, sexual orientations and backgrounds. These dancers were called "club heads' '; "A club head is someone who literally lives for the club- who makes time religiously to throw down and dance," says Archie Burnett in 2011 documentary Check Your Body at the Door. The roots of the New York City Underground club scene date back to the early 1970s with David Mancuso's Loft parties, where diversity and social inclusion were prioritized on the dance floor, and where DJs experimented with new technology and styles of sound. Mancuso's Loft parties influenced communal, DJ-led club culture across the city. A frequent dancer at the Loft was Larry Levan, who called the club his "spiritual home," and later opened another iconic club, Paradise Garage. Paradise Garage became arguably the most popular underground club, remaining strong throughout the decline of disco music. See Additional Resources (page 11) for more history.
This activity explores the continuity of rhythm and effects it has on the human body. It also explores performing and hearing two rhythms simultaneously.

1. Ask the students to form a large standing circle within the space. Ensure that there is appropriate spacing between each student.

2. Next, select a student to be the leader. Then ask the leader to step inside the large circle.

3. Ask the leader to create a rhythm with his or her hands, feet, or additional body parts; e.g. pounding on chest, slapping on thighs, etc. Once the leader has created a rhythm, ask the leader to walk along the inner circle while performing the rhythm created, simultaneously.

4. The leader will pass each student that is standing in the outside circle. As the leader passes each student, ask the student to mirror the rhythm being performed by the leader.
5. Once the leader returns to his/or her starting point, ask the leader to create a new rhythm while walking along the inner circle, and have each student standing mirror the new rhythm as the leader passes by.

6. Tell the students they are to keep the original rhythm in their bodies until the leader passes them with a new rhythm.
ACTIVITY

FIND THE RHYTHM IN YOUR NAME
( Elementary and Middle School Students)

This activity explores rhythm being created through the pronunciation and syllable construction of students’ names. The rhythm is created by the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in names.

1. Ask the students to gather into small groups of three or four and have each group stand sporadically throughout the space.

2. Once the students have formed their groupings, explain what a syllable is and how rhythmic structure is present within first names. Next, verbally provide a rhythmic structure example to the students; ex: My name is Marianne, I have three syllables in my name, “Mar-i-anne.” This introduction will help the students prepare and analyze the next instruction of the activity.
3. In their groups, ask the students to find the rhythmic structure in their individual first names by repeating their name a few times to each other at a slow steady pace. Ask the students how many syllables are in their name. This will aid the students’ memory of the rhythm they have discovered in their name and help count out their own rhythmic structure.

4. Next, have the students remove the speech component of the exercise and incorporate the dance component. Have the students create a movement/rhythm within their body that matches the rhythmic structure of their name by clapping, stepping, stomping, or using other parts of the body as their instruments; ex: Now let’s take our rhythmic structures of our names and add movement to them. No need to say your name anymore, let’s dance our names!
Ephrat Asherie and EAD have been developing UNDERSCORED since 2019, with an original premiere set for October 2020. Like many artists across the world, the artistic process of creating UNDERSCORED was halted by COVID-19, which sent the United States into quarantine in March of 2020. The company of dancers' and guest legends' opportunities to meet physically became limited, but this did not stop them from continuing to explore UNDERSCORED. For example, in November of 2020, EAD hosted a series of virtual events with ArtPower at UCSD, including discussions with the artists and Zoom performances.

While UNDERSCORED was already a time-capsule of sorts, examining the club scene throughout generations, the piece has become an example of the resilience of dancers to continue creating throughout unprecedented hardship, as well.
Resources & Further Reading

- https://www.ephratasheriedance.com

- "The History of New York Underground House" by The Verticals (*Medium*)

- The golden age of New York clubbing: 'We wanted to be part of something' by Piotr Orlov (*The Guardian*)

- *Life and Death on the New York Dance Floor, 1980-83* by Tim Lawrence

- Documentary: *Check Your Body at the Door* (2011)

- *C'mon to my house: Underground-House Dancing* by Sally R Sommer

- pentacle.org/blog/artist/ephrat-asherie-dance/

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