

MOSS  
ARTS  
CENTER

# EPHRAT ASHERIE DANCE

*Odeon*

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STUDY GUIDE



Wednesday, March 31, 2021, 10 AM EDT

PROGRAM  
*Odeon*

**Choreographer:** Ephrat Asherie,  
in collaboration with Ephrat Asherie Dance

**Music:** Ernesto Nazareth  
**Musical Direction:** Ehud Asherie  
**Lighting Design:** Kathy Kaufmann  
**Costume Design:** Mark Eric

We gratefully acknowledge and thank the Joyce Theater's School & Family Programs for generously allowing the Moss Arts Center's use and adaptation of its Ephrat Asherie Dance *Odeon* Resource and Reference Guide.  
Heather McCartney, director | Rachel Thorne Germond, associate

# EPHRAT ASHERIE DANCE

*"Ms. Asherie's movement phrases—compact bursts of choreography with rapid-fire changes in rhythm and gestural articulation—bubble up and dissipate, quickly paving the way for something new."*

—The New York Times

## THE COMPANY

**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.



## ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**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.

# ABOUT ODEON

*Odeon* is a high-energy, hybrid work that layers **breaking, hip-hop, house, and vogue** to the buoyant score of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Brazilian composer **Ernesto Nazareth**, played live.



This is the second collaboration between sister and brother team Ephrat and Ehud Asherie (choreography and musical director, respectively).

The duo reimagines Nazareth's signature compositions, noted for melding classical music with popular Afro-Brazilian rhythms.

Featuring dancers and musicians on stage, *Odeon* brings together the extended legacies of street and club dancers and remixes them in a multiplicity of choreographic structures.



“Ephrat Asherie creates a world I want to live in...stunning and unique...Odeon is real, honest and breathtaking... The work is a gift.”

—The Berkshire Edge

## ABOUT: THE MUSIC



### Ernesto Nazareth (composer)

Ernesto Nazareth (1863-1934) was born in Rio de Janeiro and lived there throughout his life. Classically trained, Nazareth was noted for creatively combining diverse classical, popular, and traditional influences into his music, not only of Brazilian and other Latin American forms (maxixe, choro, tango, samba) but also from the music of Europe (the waltz, polka, quadrilles, Schottisches), Africa (lundu), and the United States (ragtime, the fox trot). Strongly influenced by Chopin, Nazareth published his first composition, *Você Bem Sabe* (1877), at age 14. At this time he began his professional career playing in cafes, balls, society parties, and in the waiting rooms of movie theatres. In 1893 Casa Vieira Machado published his famous tango, *Brejeiro*. His piano repertoire is now part of the teaching programs of both classical and popular styles, as Nazareth once served at the boundary between these two worlds.

[Listen to Nazareth's Odeon here.](#)



### Ehud Asherie

Ephrat's brother, Ehud Asherie, is the musical director for *Odeon*.

Ehud Asherie, “a master of swing and stride” (*The New Yorker*), is a jazz pianist who integrates the venerable New York piano tradition into his inventive style. Asherie has toured clubs and festivals around the world, including South America, Europe, and Asia. His playing can be heard on countless recordings, including the 2010 Grammy Award-winning soundtrack of HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*. He recently released his 12<sup>th</sup> album, entitled *Shuffle Along* (Blue Heron Records), a solo piano performance of Eubie Blake songs from the musical *Shuffle Along*.

Read more about this sister-brother duo in this [2018 Dance Magazine interview](#).

# PRE/POST PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES & EXPLORATION

(For Elementary and Middle School Students)

## WHAT'S YOUR RHYTHM?

### FIND THE RHYTHM IN YOUR NAME

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!*

Adapted from *Dance Improvisations—Warm-Ups, Games and Choreographic Tasks* by Justine Reeve. C.2011, p.112



# INSPIRATIONS: EPHRAT ASHERIE

Ephrat began breaking at free practices in 2002 in Bushwick, New York, under Richard Santiago, a.k.a. "Break Easy," who became her mentor.

Two things that influenced Ephrat to explore break dancing:

- 1.) Listening to hip-hop in the '90s and dancing to hip-hop socially.
- 2.) Growing up with four older brothers, she loved running around and playfully competing with her siblings.

Legendary house dancer **Marjory Smarth** was another inspiration, as well as female breakers **Honey Rockwell** and **Ms. Twist**.

Ephrat attended the American Dance Festival one year and saw Rennie Harris's company perform *Rome and Jewels*, a hip-hop version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and said to herself: "Oh my goodness, that's what I want to do...Here are my two interests together, dance and theatre."

Shelter, a house dancing club, became her home away from home and allowed her to immerse herself in New York City's underground dance community.

Ephrat was attracted to breaking because she saw it as a social conversation with the body; a form of self-expression that takes place in battles and circles and leaves open the possibility for perpetual growth. The dance's sense of urgency and explosiveness spoke to her innate love of movement.

# DANCE STYLES IN ODEON

*Odeon* takes a hybrid approach to movement and explores what happens when you bring together the extended family of street and club dances—including breaking, hip-hop, house, and vogue—remix them, pick them apart, and challenge them to inhabit unfamiliar spatial and choreographic contexts.

Below are examples of street and club dances you might recognize in Asherie's *Odeon*, with examples of female pioneers in each style.

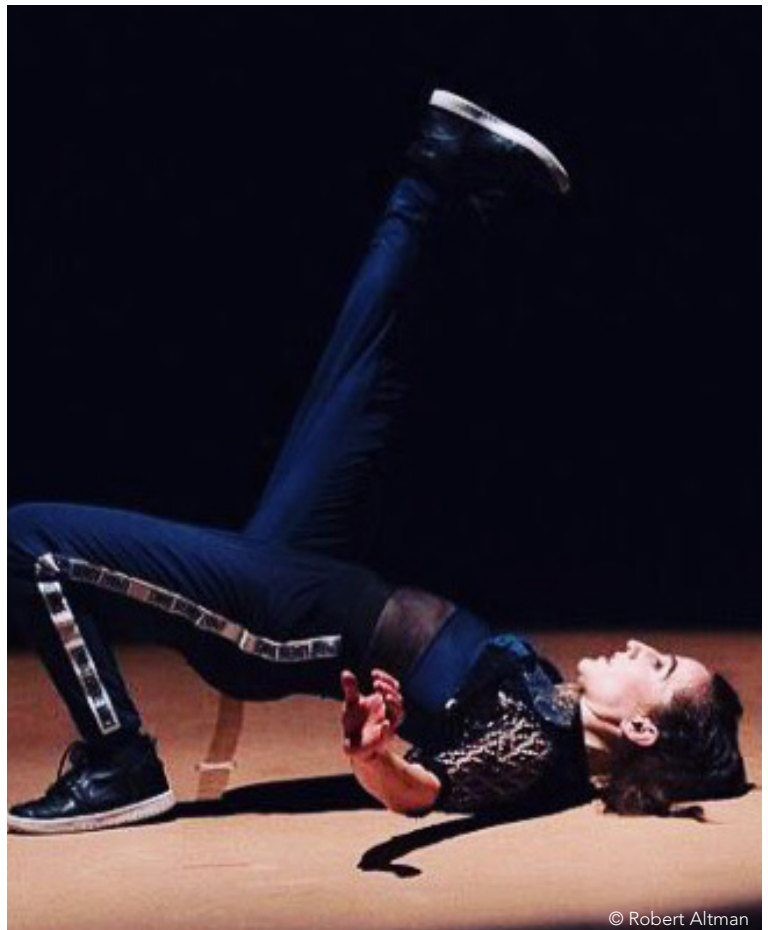
## BREAKING

(b-boying/b-girling)

[Breaking](#) includes many elements such as top rock, drops to the floor, footwork, freezes, and many different kinds of spins (on hands, head, knees, and feet). Breaking was created in the South Bronx by young African Americans and Latinx youth in the early 1970s, with initial influences coming from martial arts and a dance known as rocking. Although breaking now has a clear foundation that is taught all over the world, it is still largely improvisational with battling remaining an essential part of the dance. The emphasis is on explosive, dynamic, and original movement used to fully express oneself.

Watch: [Best of B-girls—Break the Floor 2014](#)

This video shows you the best b-girl sets at Break the Floor 2014, the famous international b-boying and b-girling battle in Cannes.





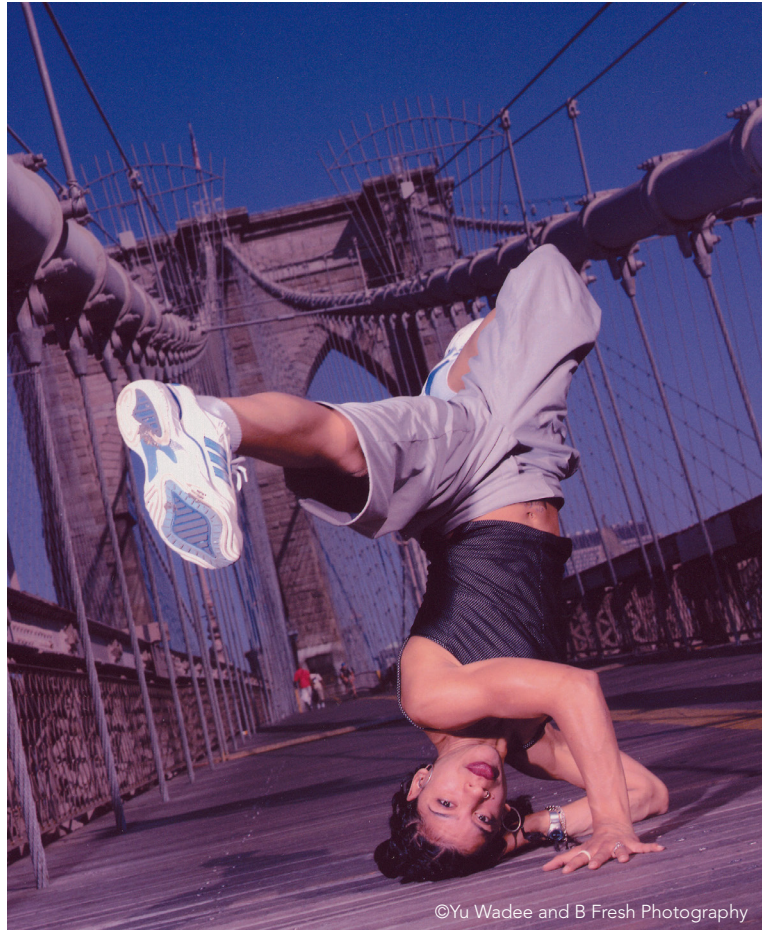
# HIP-HOP

## Rokafella

*“There have been many moments as a woman that I have felt the impact of my participation and contribution to this community.”*

–Rokafella

At the age of 11, [Rokafella](#) had already found her rhythm and was on her way to becoming a b-girl. She co-founded Full Circle Prod. Inc. in 1996 with her husband, Kwikstep, who is also a b-boy. She’s not only a renowned dancer, but a poet, musician, filmmaker, and entrepreneur who’s regarded as a pioneer for b-girls and b-boys on stages across the world.



# SAMBA

[Samba](#) is a Brazilian music genre and dance style with roots in Africa via the West African slave trade and African religious traditions—particularly of Angola and the Congo—through the samba de roda genre of the northeastern Brazilian state of Bahia, from which it derived. Although there were various forms of samba in Brazil with popular rhythms originated from drumming, samba as a music genre has its origins in Rio de Janeiro.



# HOUSE DANCE

[House dance](#) is a club dance that has roots in the underground house music scene of Chicago and New York. The genre of house music was created in Chicago in the early 1980s with seminal DJs like Frankie Knuckles spinning his legendary party at the Warehouse. The ethos of house is about inclusivity, tolerance, and true freedom of expression, values that were central to early underground clubs in New York City like the Loft and the Paradise Garage. House dance has many influences, including tap dancing, vernacular jazz, and dances from the Caribbean. The movements can be round and soft, but also dynamic and powerful with super-fast and intricate footwork and soft and flowing floor work.



# VOGUE

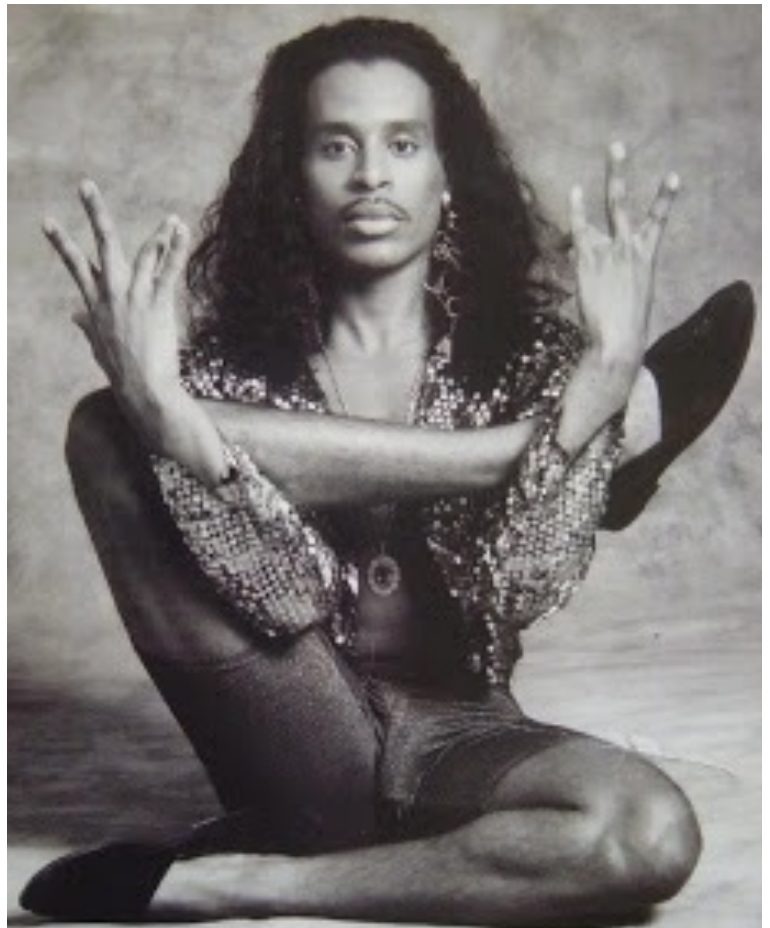
Vogue or voguing is a highly stylized club dance that was created in the 1980s by African American and Latinx LGBTQIA+ communities. This dance evolved out of the Harlem ballroom scene of the 1960s. It gained mainstream exposure with the 1990 documentary *Paris Is Burning* and after being featured in Madonna's song and video, *Vogue*. More recently, the FX TV series *Pose* is devoted to telling the stories of individuals that are a part of ballroom culture. Today vogue is a global phenomenon that continues to inspire people of all ages throughout the world.

Watch: [Official music video for Madonna's \*Vogue\*](#)

Watch: [Paris is Burning \(1990\)](#)

This documentary by Jennie Livingston focuses on drag queens living in New York City in the 1980s. Their "house" culture provides a sense of community and support for the flamboyant and often socially shunned performers.

Watch: [Pose](#) is set in the world of 1987 and "looks at the juxtaposition of several segments of life and society in New York: the rise of the luxury universe, the downtown social and literary scene, and the ball culture world."



# PRE-POST/PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES & EXPLORATION

(All ages)

## RHYTHM CIRCLE

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.

# A BASIC ELEMENT OF DANCE: TIME

*“Dancing is like bank robbery, it takes split-second timing”*

–Twyla Tharp

Just as time orders our everyday lives, so time orders dance. As it pertains to motion, time involves tempo, the speed of a movement; momentum, the steady quickening or slowing down of tempo; duration, the length of time in which movement takes place; rhythm, the quality of the beat of a movement—regular or irregular, its accent, and its meter. Sometimes, music governs the time of a dance; in other cases, dance contains its own temporal structure.

Dance can follow music. Music can follow dance. Music can take place in the same space but have no influence or dependence on one another. Dance can take place without music—either in silence or with sound created by the movement itself, and certainly music can take place without dance. In some performing arts, such as hip-hop music and dance, the rhythmic delivery of the lyrics is one of the most important elements that drives the movement.

The following exercise explores the complex role time plays in dance as both an intrinsic and extrinsic ordering force.

## Every Day, Changed

Students learn about tempo through working with daily life activities.

1. Students brainstorm and chart all the things they did in the last 24 hours, such as brushing their teeth, walking to school, waiting for the bus.
2. Each student chooses one movement from the list and explores changing the tempo of this simple movement.
3. Split the class in half and ask half the class to watch the other half do their movement at different tempos.
4. Ask your students: How did the everyday movement change when the tempo changed? Then, put the students into groups of three and have them teach their movements to one another to create a sequence. Let the group decide the tempo for each movement.
5. Groups show their phrases to the class.

Add ons:

- Students create longer sequences.
- Students add other dance vocabulary to the phrases made from every day movements.
- Add music of different tempos and genres

# RESOURCES

It is recommended that teachers preview videos or DVDs prior to student viewing.

[Ephrat Asherie Dance](#) (official website)

[Ehud Asherie](#) (official website)

[Ernesto Nazareth](#)

[Jacob's Pillow Post-Show Talk with Artistic Director Ephrat Asherie and Musical Director Ehud Asherie](#) in conversation with Jacob's Pillow Scholar-in-Residence Maura Keefe, June 28, 2018, following a performance by Ephrat Asherie Dance at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Becket, Massachusetts.

[For Everyone, By Everyone—with Ephrat Asherie](#), *Pod De Deux* Podcast

This is a New York-based podcast produced by Jessica Williams and Clara Peterson. Guests include dancers, choreographers, administrators, and others from the dance community. The podcast explores current issues and trends through frank and relaxed conversations.

[Works and Process @ Guggenheim—Post-show discussion with Ephrat Asherie Dance, Odeon](#)

[How the Bronx brought breaking to the world](#)

[The Spirit Moves: A History of Black Social Dance on Film, 1900-1986—by Mura Dehn](#)

Documentary footage of the Savoy Ballroom

[Queen of Swing](#)

Interview with Norma Miller, BBC Video

[Paris Is Burning \(1990\)](#)

This documentary directed by Jennie Livingston focuses on drag queens living in New York City in the 1980s. Their "house" culture provides a sense of community and support for the flamboyant and often socially shunned performers. Groups from each house compete in elaborate balls that take cues from the world of fashion.

[Pose](#)

*Pose* is set in 1987 and "looks at the juxtaposition of several segments of life and society in New York: the rise of the luxury universe, the downtown social and literary scene and the ball culture world."

[Planet B-Boy \(2007\)](#)

This excerpt from the 2007 documentary film focuses on the 2005 Battle of the Year, while describing b-boy culture and history as a global phenomenon.

[Best of B-girls | Break the Floor 2014](#)

This video shows you the best b-girls sets at Break the Floor 2014, the famous international b-boying and b-girling battle in Cannes.

[Official music video for Madonna's Vogue](#)

Directed by David Fincher from Madonna's soundtrack album *I'm Breathless* (1990)

[The Art & History of Stepping](#)

[Interview with Ana "Rokafella" Garcia](#), renowned dancer, poet, musician, filmmaker, and entrepreneur who's regarded as a pioneer for b-girls and b-boys on stages across the world.

Gilbert, Anne G. *Creative Dance for All Ages*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, 1992.

Reeve, Justine D. *Dance Improvisations: Warm-Ups, Games and Choreographic Tasks*. Human Kinetics, Inc., 2011.

[Ephrat Asherie Dance Explodes with Joyously Playful Odeon](#)—*San Diego Story*

[A Choreographer Learns from the Club: "Live True, Dance Free"](#)—*New York Times*

Resource and Reference Guide © 2019

Created by Heather McCartney, director of school and family programs, Joyce Theater; and Rachel Thorne Germond, school and family programs associate, Joyce Theater

Special thanks to Marianne Rose Weber and Alondra Mora

For JOYCE Partner Teachers and Teaching Artists

# MOSS ARTS CENTER

FREE ONLINE EVENT

Thursday, April 15, 10 AM EDT

## **CARTOGRAPHY**

Conceived and created by  
Kaneza Schaal and Christopher Myers

Open to all students, teachers, and families; recommended for grades 8-12.

Hear the stories of young refugees when new theatre work *Cartography* asks what part we play in the lives of young people who set out into the unsure waters of their futures.



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