



Anthony Williams' "Urban Nutcracker" This December at the Boch Center Shubert Theatre

The buzzy Boston production brings its core mission of “diversity through dance” to the stage with ballet, hip-hop, tap, and more. All set to music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and Duke Ellington

Highlights this season include long-time Drosselmeyer Gianni DiMarco passing the role to dancers Sabi Varga and Toby Towson, and an LGBTQ+-inclusive performance on December 23

A nationwide TV broadcast of “Anthony Williams' Urban Nutcracker” along with companion documentary, “Beyond The Stage: The Urban Nutcracker, Community & The Arts” distributed by American Public Television

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For Immediate Release (November 9, 2022)—[Anthony Williams' "Urban Nutcracker"](#), the modern Boston-centric holiday classic presented by City Ballet of Boston, returns to the Boch Center Shubert Theatre this December! This production celebrates the city of Boston with winter scenes set in present-day downtown Boston, blending the rhythms of Duke Ellington with the classical music of Tchaikovsky. Anchored by classical ballet, the performances also include a broad range of dance forms such as tap, hip-hop, flamenco, and jazz, accompanied by a 8-piece live orchestra of local musicians.

Tony Williams says, “Our production draws in many aspects of Boston and its backdrops—it is really a show I created to honor Boston and our history. I am happy to have a true “Boston Nutcracker,” because it pays homage to the City and its many iconic landmarks! Our production captures the essence of the traditional *Nutcracker* story, while using the glorious music of Tchaikovsky along with the inner-city twist of the incomparable Duke Ellington, played live by the Urban Nut/Band. One never gets bored while watching the many dance styles. We feature ballet with Snowflake Fairies dancing on pointe to Tap, Hip Hop, Flamenco and Swing. For 21 years Anthony Williams' *Urban Nutcracker* has been celebrating diversity through dance!”

Featuring new and original cast members—dancers Sabi Varga and Toby Towson as Drosselmeyer, tap phenomenon Khalid Hill (who is also featured in the holiday movie, “Spirited” starring Will Ferrell, Ryan Reynolds, and Octavia Spencer), local hip-hop legend Ricardo Foster Jr, and Uganda-born ballerina Victoria Jaenson—along with partnerships with the Northeast Youth Ballet, Walnut Hill School for the Arts, and Revels, “Urban Nutcracker” can be enjoyed by the whole family, and all ages!

And now, audiences around the USA can watch “Anthony Williams' Urban Nutcracker” on public television! American Public Television is distributing a filmed performance of the popular holiday stage production along with a 30-minute companion documentary, “Beyond the Stage: The Urban Nutcracker, Community & The Arts” to public television stations nationwide. The programs will start airing November 25, 2022, check your local public TV listings for upcoming broadcasts. The Greater Boston broadcast takes place on December 17 on GBH 44.

Deemed “a holiday arts tradition reflecting the rich multicultural diversity of Boston” by The Boston Globe, more than 150 performers – local children and professional dancers – take the stage in this joyful rendition of heroine Clarice’s adventure with the street magician Drosselmeyer.

They explore iconic Boston landmarks such as the “Make Way for Ducklings” statues, the golden dome of the State House, the Boston Public Garden, Fenway Park’s “Green Monster,” the Citgo sign, the Hatch Shell, and Downtown Boston. The stage comes alive with hundreds of colorful costumes re-imagined by designer Dustin Todd Rennells (originally designed by Rebecca Cross) with eye-catching sets by Janie Howland.

“We couldn’t be happier to host City Ballet of Boston’s iconic *Urban Nutcracker* again this year,” said Joe Spaulding, President & CEO of the Boch Center. “*Urban Nutcracker* was built around themes of inclusion, community and diversity. Sharing this type of programming with the City of Boston is central to the Boch Center’s mission and we value our partnership with City Ballet greatly.”

NEW DROSSELMEYERS THIS YEAR

This season’s production sees the iconic role of Drosselmeyer passed to dancers Sabi Varga and Toby Towson from Gianni DiMarco, who assumed the role in 2009, after the untimely death of the original Drosselmeyer, Dr. Michael Shannon.

A former soloist with Boston Ballet, Sabi Varga received his training at the Hungarian Dance Academy, and was named Best Young Dancer at the International Rudolf Nureyev Competition. Upon graduation he joined Alberta Ballet, and from 2002-2017 he danced with the Boston Ballet. Varga has performed principal roles in works by George Balanchine, Helgi Tomasson, and Christopher Wheeldon.

Toby Towson is an American gymnast and dancer. He performed as the *Sesame Street* Muppet dog Barkley in its debut appearance in *A Special Sesame Street Christmas*, and in season 10. Towson was the 1968 and 1969 NCAA Gymnastics Champion in the Floor Exercise. As an assistant to U.S. Women’s gymnastics coach Kelli Hill, Towson coached Olympic gymnast Dominique Dawes. He has coached nationally with the USA Gymnastics Talent Opportunity Program and is a National Level Judge with USA Gymnastics.

URBAN NUTCRACKER AND DOCUMENTARY ON AMERICAN PUBLIC TELEVISION

ANTHONY WILLIAMS’ URBAN NUTCRACKER is a filmed - for - television, live performance of the popular holiday stage production that has been produced for the past 20 years in Boston to both critical and popular acclaim.

BEYOND THE STAGE: THE URBAN NUTCRACKER, COMMUNITY & THE ARTS is a half-hour companion piece to the performance program and features behind-the-scenes footage of the production, and commentary on how accessibility and representation in the arts creates community and empowers youth. With a focus on Anthony Williams’ “Urban Nutcracker”— a hybrid production that combines traditional ballet with a gamut of homegrown styles, from hip-hop to tap to Russian folk dance—we witness the power of art to build community through movement and music, shared in a spirit of respect and free expression.

Both of these festive and dynamic holiday specials are presented and distributed nationally by American Public Television and will be released to public television stations nationwide on November 25, 2022 (check local listings).

LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE PROGRAM

The closing evening of *Urban Nutcracker* sees an LGBTQ+-inclusive version of “Urban Nutcracker” take the stage. With same-sex partnering, male dancers in drag and en pointe, this performance challenges typical gender stereotypes in dance.

Local drag artist Patty Bourrée joins “Urban Nutcracker” for this performance. Patty Bourrée is a singer, cabaret performer, and drag artist. Known for her big voice, vintage style, and bad attitude, an evening with Patty Bourrée is always a unique and unforgettable experience. Follow her on Instagram @pattybourree and read about her [library story hour](#) as told by GBH News.

More Information:

Urban Nutcracker will play the Boch Center Shubert Theatre (265 Tremont St, Boston, MA 02116).

Tickets are available at the Boch Center Box Office, <https://www.bochcenter.org/events/detail/urbannutcracker2022>, or by calling (866) 348-9738.

Groups of 10 or more may reserve discounted tickets now by contacting Boch Center Group Sales at (617) 532-1116 or groups@bochcenter.org.

Ticket Prices: \$29-\$118

Saturday, December 17 at 2:00 PM
Saturday, December 17 at 7:00 PM – PRESS NIGHT
Sunday, December 18 at 1:00 PM
Sunday, December 18 at 5:30 PM
Wednesday, December 21 at 7:00 PM
Thursday, December 22 at 7:00 PM
Friday, December 23 at 7:00 PM (LGBT Inclusive Performance)

All performances are approximately 2 hours with one 20 minute intermission.

Praise for *Urban Nutcracker*:

“When Drosselmeyer’s magic whisks [Clarice] off to the Boston Common, the Snow Queen and Snow King usher in a lovely, eye-catching sequence of dancing snowflakes that is well-crafted and skillfully danced.” -*The Boston Globe*

“[Urban Nutcracker] continues to defy tradition while solidifying itself as a local holiday icon... You’ll find a menagerie of bright colors, modern dance, and a swinging score.” - *WGBH, Open Studio with Jared Bowen*

“A modern take on the classic 19th century ballet.” - *NBC Boston*

“Hip-hop holiday fun... [with] enthusiasm and a sense of inclusive community onstage.” -*The Boston Globe*

“*Urban Nutcracker* has become a staple in Boston during the holiday season.” - *Huffington Post*

“The quintessential show of the holiday season.” - *The Patriot Ledger*

About American Public Television

American Public Television (APT) is the leading syndicator of high-quality, top-rated programming to the nation’s public television stations. Founded in 1961, APT distributes 250 new program titles per year and more than one-third of the top 100 highest-rated public

television titles in the U.S. APT's diverse catalog includes prominent documentaries, performance, dramas, how-to programs, classic movies, children's series and news and current affairs programs. *Midsomer Murders*, *America's Test Kitchen*, *AfroPoP*, *Rick Steves' Europe*, *Pacific Heartbeat*, *Christopher Kimball's Milk Street Television*, *Legacy List with Matt Paxton*, *Front and Center*, *Lidia's Kitchen*, *Kevin Belton's New Orleans Kitchen*, *Simply Ming*, *The Best of the Joy of Painting* with Bob Ross, *Front & Center*, James Patterson's *Kid Stew* and *NHK Newslines* are a sampling of APT's programs, considered some of the most popular on public television. APT also licenses programs internationally through its APT Worldwide service and distributes Create[®]TV — featuring the best of public television's lifestyle programming — and WORLD[™], public television's premier news, science and documentary channel. To find out more about APT's programs and services, visit APTonline.org.

About City Ballet of Boston

City Ballet of Boston (CBB) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that provides quality dance training to a diverse urban community allowing it to run an elite professional company. The company is built on a robust values system of inclusiveness and believes that diversity through dance heightens creativity both in the studio and on the stage. The core philosophy of a rigorous dance curriculum is that quality dance builds physical and mental discipline and is also an excellent means of cultural education.

CBB has in place a rich training program to deliver a quality dance education, focused primarily on ballet, in a comprehensively supportive environment. The training provided goes beyond dance, and students will receive support and guidance to develop better connections with each other and their communities. This is a significant step in achieving the ultimate goal of creating more professional dancers of color and for these dancers to experience personal growth and development to sustain them through their careers and beyond.

The company's scholarship training program, Boston City Youth Ballet, offers two levels for young dancers. The introductory Relevé & intermediate Developpé levels (ages 8-11) is perfect for beginning students who are eager to learn. For more advanced dancers ages 12-20, the Allongé level focuses on both technique and performing artistry. The program, now in its third year, is funded in part by the Carl & Ruth Shapiro Family Foundation. cityballetofboston.org

About *Urban Nutcracker* and Tony Williams

The "Urban Nutcracker" celebrates multicultural Boston through a broad range of diverse dance styles. "Urban Nutcracker" harnesses the power of the arts to unite diverse communities to be a catalyst for positive social change. Presenting sponsor of Urban Nutcracker is Adage Capital.

Tony Williams is a dance pioneer and retired international ballet star. Williams' dance philosophy uses the arts to unite diverse communities in Boston, having had direct experience on how transformative the arts can be on young lives. As a young man, he gained access to Boston Ballet's dance program and progressed to become a principal dancer. From there he danced with the Joffrey Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and performed all over the world. When Williams retired, he returned to his hometown of Jamaica Plain, where it all began, and opened a dance school. Not long after, he created the beloved *Urban Nutcracker* which annually enjoys a successful run in downtown Boston. Widely respected as a progressive dance educator, Williams has won the 2019 Boston Dance Alliance Dance Champion Award, the 2011 Dance Teacher Magazine Award, and the 2008 Wheelock Family Theater's Wheel Award alongside Jacques D'Amboise. urbannutcracker.com

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