

PRE-SHOW NOTES:

“Dancing an Indigenous Future: Native American Hip-Hop and Freestyle in Albuquerque” is a six-minute film featuring Raven Bright and Anne Pesata, two hip-hop and freestyle dancers in their late twenties. Raven is a tall man with a lanky build and sharp features. Anne is a petite woman with rounded features and brunette hair that falls just below her shoulders.

The film takes place in various outdoor settings where Raven and Anne like to dance: an adobe-style courtyard, atop a concrete dam with mountains behind them, before a mural painted on a warehouse wall and several spots in the desert. The film moves rapidly between the different sites, employing quick cutaways, often focusing for just seconds on an individual dancer in the midst of a specialized move. Conversely, slow motion footage is sometimes used to hone in on a specific movement or body part.

The film also takes us to the Breakin’ Hearts hip-hop festival at the El Rey theater. Here we meet Randy L. Barton, a DJ and artist also known as Randy Boogie. He’s tall with broad shoulders and dyed blonde hair that peeks out from the knit beanies he wears. Lastly, the film depicts a unique hip-hop powwow called The Sacred Cypher held at the University of New Mexico, with archival footage from 2014.

[Note: Personal descriptions are worded to reflect how each dancer identifies.]

CONTENT DESCRIPTION:

Speaking in the Navajo language, Raven says, “Greetings, my family and my people.” A quick montage shows partners Raven and Anne dancing in a variety of settings: against a backdrop of rock quarry rubble, in a club and atop boulders, closing with a shot of them smiling and laughing together.

Raven and Anne dance in an adobe courtyard full of potted cacti. They dance closely to one another but do not touch. The focus is on their arms and torsos. Their movement is both crisp and lyrical. Their hands are very expressive and continually move in a blend of soft, curved shapes, juxtaposed with quick flicking movements: elongated taut fingers, open palms, loose fists, laced fingers, twisting wrists. The dancers let each other’s movement inform their own, sometimes mirroring one another, sometimes creating opposing dynamics and sometimes embellishing an improvised sequence. At one point, Raven draws his hand away from Anne as if tugging her toward him, then mimes pulling and releasing; Anne follows his movements by leading with her chest and then contracting.

TEXT: IF CITIES COULD DANCE - The screen divides into a horizontal triptych for the video series' title sequence—on top is a street level view of a dancer's leg and sneaker spinning and rotating across the frame; in the middle, a queer Black male vogue dancer flips his long braids as he swiftly waves his arms and the words "If Cities Could Dance" appear over his image; and on the bottom, three women dancers of color stand in line and arch back, cradling one another. The words, "our history, our culture, our moves" appears over a montage of quick cut dancers from across the country, including a jookin' dancer, a Native American (Seneca and Muscogee Creek) hoop dancer in eagle formation; two Chicago foot workers dancing in sync; and a trio of hip-hop dancers performing group choreography in front of a street mural with graffiti art. The sequence culminates with queer cis woman vogue dancer looking into the camera, waving her arms and pointing her finger toward the viewer.

TEXT: Albuquerque – Native American hip-hop and freestyle

Raven and Anne lean against a concrete structure, undulating to a drum beat, sitting together looking out over the city, then on a large cement rooftop that butts up against rocky foothills. They stand close in three-quarter profile in wide stances. Anne is in front, rocking forward and back with strong elongated arms, reaching forward and stretching up. The dancers' arm movements are fluid and graceful. Anne steps to the side with palms together and snakes down to her knees. Raven extends one arm toward her as he slowly circles the other toward her.

A map of New Mexico situates its Indigenous nations: 19 Pueblo towns and 3 reservations.

A map of Albuquerque segues to a wall heavily plastered with gasoline company advertising and street signs, to a mural, to a heavily made-up Day of the Dead statue, to the El Rey theater marquee that reads, "Feb 29 Breakin' Hearts."

Inside the bustling venue, dancers perform on a well-worn wooden stage. A dancer in loose clothes and a beanie does a one-handed handstand spin; another makes five revolutions in a one-handed modified flag spin, elbows and knees bent.

Anne enters the theater, turning to the camera to say, "We're at Breakin' Hearts 2020."

A Black man with closely cropped facial hair pirouettes with one leg bent, thigh perpendicular to floor, holding hands up as if gripping a steering wheel. Raven freestyles while many enthusiastic onlookers surround the stage. His dance is athletic and energetic, ending with a pop into a handstand, which he locks with bent knees.

Dancers greet each other on the stage as Randy, dressed in hunter orange and a matching knit cap, dances in place as he mans the elaborate soundboard setup and DJs from two turntables.

TEXT: Randy L. Barton – aka Randy Boogie – Dancer, DJ, artist

Randy (Navajo, or Diné) is outside when he begins his narration about Foundations of Freedom. He wears a ball cap, an orange T-shirt with a bedazzled Playboy Bunny logo, with the pointy ears supplanted by feathers and skeleton gloves. He motions a heart shape, smoothly mimes shooting with index and middle fingers, then folds hands over his chest with fingers splayed in a crew hand sign. He smiles gently.

A photo of young people in matching T-shirts flash their crew hand signs.

Randy stands on the sidewalk in a white knit beanie, long-sleeved white cotton T-shirt with striking red and black abstract graphics and black sweats. He leans forward into the camera frame. His fingers are splayed. He twists his palms up, then together, then apart again, back and forth. He waggles his fingers. Keeping his legs in a wide stance, he hops sideways in a staccato tempo while moving his arms in a stylized bow and arrow shooting movement.

In the venue, two teenagers in ball caps and open button-down shirts over T-shirts sing at microphone stands.

TEXT: Anne Pesata, Dancer.

Anne wears a white T-shirt, black sweatpants and white high-top sneakers. Her hair is in a loose doubled-through ponytail. She dances in a very dynamic and energetic style, explosive yet rounded, taking up a lot of room on the stage. Her dance is full of spins, jabs, stomps and lassoing arms.

On her back, she swings her arm and swoops to her knees. She arches back, swings around on her knees and vigorously swings her arm again, using the momentum to jump to her feet. She bends back again—her head just inches from the floor. She swivels on her hips and leaps to her feet with punching, jabbing momentum. She lands with a high, bent-knee stomp and pivots, one hand on her hip, sassy. She holds her upper arms close to her sides. Rapid-fire step, ball change in place, then large hop skips. She jabs and then flings her arms out wide, crosses them in front of her, then sketches a circular shape in the air. She quickly brings her arms in tightly, holding a contained pulse before erupting again, twirling her hand at her side like Charlie Chaplin

with his walking stick. She stretches to the side, circles her arms in front and overhead and dances backward.

As she speaks of her culture, photographs of her as a child are shown: playing with a wagon as a toddler on the reservation, at school in a denim skirt and floral blouse, standing proudly in full Native dress at a powwow.

As her narration continues, she is dancing atop a tall pile of large boulders.

As she says “strong connection to my culture,” a slow motion shot begins. She is approximately 25 feet off the ground, dancing against a bright blue sky with wispy cirrus clouds in the background. She stands solidly in plié in a wide second position, straddling two boulders, and spreads her arms and moves dramatically, as if conjuring.

Back at the festival venue, people hang out around the stage as teen dancers rehearse. A young boy in the spotlight spins and tries to keep his balance.

As Anne talks about meeting Raven and their spark of creativity. An intimate moment of caressing each other’s face segues to their dance outside. Raven cradles Anne’s hands in his, focused intensely on her fingers. She wears turquoise and silver rings, and Raven wears a thick leather and turquoise bracelet. Their fingers are spread slightly and gently curved. Twisting wrists and intertwined forearms winding upward. Anne is kneeling; Raven slowly dips down and they kiss, lips barely grazing, as he speaks of their ability to communicate without words.

The camera cuts to a close up of a yellow cholla cactus flower, then back to the partners. In a standing position, Raven is straddling Anne’s thighs, facing her. She bends her knees into a low, straightened backbend and holds Raven’s ankles as a ballast as she planks just inches from the ground. He springs off of her and she does a one-arm cartwheel over him. Seamlessly, they straighten and begin to dance together again, in strong, smooth movements full of large arm swings, circling, crouching and side-to-side swaying. They move from deep pliés up into a relevé, down to grazing the ground. The dance is fluid and dynamic, with no discernable leader as they follow each other closely and let their individual movements play off of each other.

TEXT: Raven Bright, Dancer

As Raven talks about being half Diné and half German, he stands along a river bank. His hands are cupped in front of him, with his fingers poking out to the sides making a crew hand sign. In slow motion he spins on one foot, then moves into a butterfly jump—a complete 360-degree, backward airborne leap three feet off the ground. As he

lands and spins on one hand, the scene cuts back to the El Rey theater, where he executes a flared helicopter spin. His dance is powerful, acrobatic, peppered with complex stylized positions that he locks, elongates and holds before he smoothes into the next move.

As Anne speaks of her intense, almost spiritual dancing, there's a slow motion montage of several different dancers freestyling: undulating, spinning, body isolation, shimmying. Raven in an exaggerated running man step. Hethrows himself forward with extreme force, arms flying wildly behind him.

A close up of Randy shows him bopping as he DJs.

The video cuts to shots of a freeway and colorful murals, including one with statues lining the top; Randy overlooking a large gathering; a circle of seven drumsticks beating a large drum.

TEXT: The Sacred Cypher UNM Student Union Building, Albuquerque

A young Native man in a fur and suede cap with feathers dangling at the side chants into a microphone while a man in formal powwow attire dances in the circle.

As Randy explains the four elements of sacred cypher, there are video snippets of the large, enthusiastic crowd and the many dancers, who are diverse in ethnicity, movement style, age and clothing. One dancer jumps into the air and lands in the splits; another does an Eagle dance, arms wide to the side; a teenage girl in jeans and an off-the-shoulder T-shirt jabs; a man clutches the crotch of his pants as he dances; two young children in full Native dress dance off to the side; three young women in full dress perform; a man in a skull T-shirt spins on his hands; an older woman in the crowd gets down with her side elbow moves; a woman in a silky white top vigorously dances with her elbows towards the crowd; a dancer in athletic wear kneels and shimmies as they arch back. A man in the crowd carries a banner that reads, "You are on Indian Land."

Timelapse footage: moving clouds change from daylight into amber and then purple; a bird sits on a wire, and another flies past a full moon in a still pale blue sky.

Outside at night, streetlights illuminate a group of young dancers taking turns in a circle, social style. A young dancer with kinky, auburn, shoulder-length hair wears a billowed shirt tucked into grey denim. They spin and then stand with one arm outstretched, repeatedly bringing the other arm to meet it at a furious pace. The dancer drags it diagonally down, across their belly, and undulates.

Dancers in the circle are highlighted against a mural.

Raven does a flared helicopter spin, lands in a sitting position, extends a foot to the side, grabs it and tucks it behind him. His other leg is bent to form a triangle; he makes a circle with his arm and bobs into it. He winds his arm around his head, continually making elaborate shapes with his arms and legs, which he pops into and locks. Balanced on one hand, he swings his free arm in a circle, using the momentum to lift his feet off the ground in a momentary side plank.

Dancers are in a line, with Anne at the focus. They make powerful lateral moves, side kicks, leaps and praying mantis positions.

Dancers are in the circle, silhouetted.

Raven and Anne pop up in a selfie video over credits and point to a button to click for more episodes of the series.

Credits appear on bottom part of screen. Additional featured dancers: Sarah Hogland Gurulé, Daniel Xikome, Malinalli Hernandez, Crystál Zamora, Nate Herndon. Director: Shaandiin Tome. Cinematographer: Shaandiin Tome, Forrest Goodluck. Producer: Charlotte Buchen Khadra. Editor: Elie Khadra, Charlotte Buchen Khadra. Associate Producer: Masha Pershay. Additional Camera: Forrest Goodluck, Austin Madrid. Production Assistant: Chinwe Oniah, Walker Martin. Consultant: Rulan Tangen, Artistic Director of Dancing Earth. Archival Materials: Jonathan Sims, No Reservations Productions; Anne Pesata, Raven Bright. Murals: Aaron Noble, Nancy Young, Christian Michael Gallegos. Music: Randy L. Barton aka Randy Boogie. Special Thanks: Dancing Earth Creations, Shane Montoya, Breakin'Hearts. Senior Producer: Kelly Whalen. Executive Producer: David Markus. Support of KQED Arts is provided by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Support is also provided by the members of KQED. A production of KQED Arts © 2020 KQED.

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