

**THE
KENNEDY
CENTER**

**CUESHEET
PERFORMANCE
GUIDE**



Photo by Douglas Kirkland

DEBBIE ALLEN'S
FREEZE FRAME...
Stop the Madness

Written, directed, and choreographed by Debbie Allen

JFKC
A Centennial Celebration
of John F. Kennedy

Please note this show contains mature themes that may not be appropriate for audiences younger than 13.

What's Going On?

What Happens in the Story?

A robbery. A police chase. Shots fired. A heart-rending case of mistaken identity. And a weary Los Angeles neighborhood is left once again to figure out what's happening to its young people and why. That lays down the framework for *Freeze Frame...Stop the Madness*, a performance based on true stories and told in a fusion of drama, music, dance, video projection, and art.

The show opens with a gang member taking down a convenience store, and the police in pursuit. The suspect disappears into a jamming dance party where a cop takes aim—and all action freezes. The backstory then

unfolds in a collage of overlapping characters and cross-cutting relationships that carry the community back to that fateful moment.

Freeze Frame...Stop the Madness is a theater performance that draws much of its soul from the Hip Hop universe. Hip Hop is more than a beat, more than rapid-fire lyrics, more than a gravity-defying style of dance, and more than the sum of those art forms. It is a way of experiencing and interpreting the world—a culture, in other words.



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Who's Who

David Washington an activist poet, nicknamed **Moon** because he "glows" when he raps

Bishop James Washington III David's father and head of L.A.'s most successful Black Baptist church

Eleo Ramirez he can't hear and doesn't speak, but Eleo paints the pain he still feels from the drive-by shooting that killed his mother and sister

Rosanna Eleo's grandmother and the oldest to join a gang for protection

Eartha Dolphin nicknamed **Dancin' Snack** for her breaking moves

Abe Jones the high school basketball star, **Slick** hopes his skills can take him to the pros

Jimmy aka **The Collector**; a hate-filled gang member raised in an abusive family

Officer Hodges a white cop who relocated to L.A. for the sunshine

Ms. Belinda a music and voice teacher and a champion for the kids of the community

DA NI the smartest and most loved kid in the neighborhood

What to Look and Listen for

- How different styles of dance reveal characters and what's going on inside their hearts and heads. What steps and vocal styles signal love, optimism, and hope? What moves indicate despair, anger, and violence?
- How action spills over from video scenes on the big screen onto the stage, and the interplay between video and live action. Also, watch for ways effects create different settings, like the church, the streets, the park, a basketball court.
- How the performance uses freeze frames. A "freeze frame" is a film and video technique where the action stops so the image looks like a still photo. Watch for freeze frames on-screen and onstage. When are they used? What are they trying to capture or communicate?

What to Think About

- Think about how the different generations are portrayed in the show. Where do the older folks find support and comfort? Where do the children and teens find comfort and joy? When and why do the different generations struggle to connect and communicate with each other?
- One vocal refrain in a song goes: *They don't even know our name / Gonna take us out just the same*. What role do names and identity play as a theme in the show?
- Bullying shows up in different forms during the performance. One theory about bullying is that when people love themselves, they don't want to hurt others. But when people hate themselves, they want others to suffer. How does this idea apply to the play? How do people deal with bullying? How can friends and allies help targets of bullying reclaim their power?
- At one point, community members have a meeting, "The Stop the Madness Conversation about Gun Violence in America." Listen to the pro/con positions about guns and gun control shared by the people there. Which side do you lean toward? Can you sum up the other side's position in an unbiased way?
- Why is the show called *Freeze Frame...Stop the Madness*?



Photo by Oliver Bockelberg

Talking Gun Rights and Gun Control

Columbine. Virginia Tech. Sandy Hook. Charleston. San Bernardino. Orlando. Dallas. You will hear these place names mentioned and sung more than once in the show. They were all sites of mass shootings that left innocent people dead.

Guns, gun violence, and gun control in the United States are core issues in *Freeze Frame...Stop the Madness*. In many parts of the United States, guns are among the most controversial topics to bring up. Most discussions on the subject end with no minds changed and everybody angry.

It is useful to keep in mind that any debate is not joined just at the level of facts and intellect, but also — and maybe more importantly — in the realm of emotions. Recognizing and respecting the intense feelings driving the discussions are essential to keeping them constructive.

Debbie Allen: The Creative Force

As writer, choreographer, and director, Debbie Allen is the creator behind *Freeze Frame...Stop the Madness*. The three-time Emmy® Award-winner has taught the potency of dance to thousands of youth at Debbie Allen Dance Academy in Los Angeles.

This performance, though, is closest to her heart, she says, after years of watching futilely as youth, especially African American and Latino youth, die in an ongoing epidemic of gang and gun violence. "It's like all these souls keep speaking to me and it's like we've got to do something about it."

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