

Classical Arts, Remixed:
Encouraging Millennial Engagement in the Classical Arts Through Hip-Hop

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Introduction

As classical arts see a decline in consumption, it is hard to ignore the popularity of hip-hop among the Millennial generation. In a short amount of time hip-hop has broken numerous records in terms of both sales and popularity. As the Millennial generation engages within the hip-hop culture, the classical arts are finding ways to stay alive by incorporating hip-hop elements. Classical arts incorporating popular music is not a new trend. Historically, classical music has played with the idea of incorporating popular music, like in the 80s, to bring in new audiences to keep the classical music world alive. Organizations and festivals still do this today to appeal to a wider and younger audience. An example of this is Lake George Music Festival (LGMF). LGMF is a two-week music residency festival in Lake George, NY. Classical musicians and composers come from all over the country to perform nightly for two weeks. On the program were traditional classical pieces, like Schumann and Stravinsky. The performance on Saturday, August 17th, 2019 was dedicated to playing popular music arrangements with their classical instruments in a very social setting. This was in effort to appeal to the younger audiences because the older audiences were thinning out due to age and other health restrictions. Although the classical music world has been experimenting with mixing genres there has been better receptiveness to incorporating pop than with hip-hop.

The reservation to incorporate hip-hop comes from the willingness to acknowledge hip-hop as a valid art form with substance. While there are musicians who are opposed to this integration, there has also been positive commentary surrounding this shift from pure classical arts to hip-hop infused classical art. Nonetheless, this incorporation is inspiring young audiences to explore the world of classical art instead of disregarding it completely. This shift has brought

hip-hop, what was once considered strictly a street art form, into highly regarded performing arts centers across the world. Not only are the musicians noticing the decline in support and interest in the classical arts among younger audiences, but it is also affecting performing arts centers who cater to older, conservative audiences. Performing arts centers cater to the interests of their immediate audiences, but what happens when that audience is slowly dying out. Enter the idea of crossover performances. Touring artist groups that dabble in both worlds, like Black Violin and RUBBERBANDance Group, have become increasingly popular with performing arts centers that hope to maintain their current audiences while looking to the future. This paper will examine the way classical performing arts groups have incorporated hip-hop elements causing it to start appearing in venues like performing arts centers and the way Millennials are interacting with this type of art form.

For the purposes of this project, the paper will be focusing on touring artistic groups that have or will be performing at The Performing Arts Center at Purchase College. The Performing Arts Center, The PAC, will serve as a home base for the research as it is a good representation of the type of venues that hip-hop infused art is being brought to and allows for easy access for research. All the primary research will come from sources at The Performing Arts Center, due to access and connections with the Purchase College campus.

Methodology

To examine the thesis of this study, I will be utilizing the method of case study. Case studies are based on “in-depth investigations of a single person, group, event or community” (McLeod). It is a commonly used research method in the social sciences that investigates a

phenomenon within its real-life context. “Case studies are analysis of persons, groups, events, decisions, periods, policies, institutions or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods” (PressAcademic). The primary research for analysis will be collected through interviews and observations of three different artistic groups: Black Violin, RUBBERBANDance Group and The Hip Hop Nutcracker. Each representing a different art form, but within the same theme of hip-hop infused classical art.

The Case Study is the Purchase PAC with a specific focus on three particular artists that have performed at the Center.

The Millennial Generation

A generation cohort is used to divide the larger population into smaller, more predictable segments and is characterized by an individual’s birth year. It says that the groups have similar traits and trends due to experiencing certain world events at certain age points in their lives. It places a great importance on the influence of events in the behavior of a group of individuals. This paper will focus on Generation Y, otherwise known as the Millennial generation and the individuals in this particular group are commonly referred to as Millennials. The term Millennials was coined by Howe and Strauss in 1991 in their book *Generations*. It is important to note that the Millennial age range can vary slightly from source to source, ranging anywhere from the early 1980s to the early 2000s. For this paper, a Millennial is being defined as anyone born between 1981 and 2000.

The Millennial generation is one of the largest cohorts in terms of population. There is an estimated 83.1 million according to a 2015 press release from the United States Census Bureau

(Millennials). Millennials make up one quarter of the nation's population. By the end of 2019, it is said that Millennials will overtake the baby boomer generation, folks born between 1946 and 1964, as the largest living adult generation according to research done by the Pew Research Center (Bialik).

Generational Differences				
	Silent Generation	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Approximate Years	1928 - 1945	1946 - 1964	1965 - 1980	1981 - 2000
Education Attainment % of those who completed 4+ years of college	12	21	26	32.5
Median Income with a bachelor's degree	\$64,645	\$95,182	\$109,752	\$105,343
Location % of those living in metropolitan areas	67	68	84	88

Source: "How Millennials Compare with Prior Generations." *Social & Demographic Trends Project*, Pew Research Center.

In terms of physical location, Millennials are finding themselves more and more in metropolitan areas. Only 67 percent of the Silent generation lived in cities when they were young compared to 68 percent of Baby Boomers, 84 percent of Gen X, and with the highest percentage 88 percent of Millennials (Fry). Millennials, when compared to the silent, baby boomer, and generation x, have a higher level of educational attainment. In 2017, Pew Research Center determined that 29 percent of male millennials earned a four-year degree and 36 percent of female millennials earned a four-year degree. Earning the millennial generation the highest ranking percentage of educational attainment. Economically speaking, millennials earn a median income of \$105,343 with a bachelor degree, \$62,358 with some college education and \$49,363 with a high school diploma (Fry).

Millennials are an increasingly diverse group in terms of race and ethnicity. Millennials are more diverse than any generation before them with approximately 44.2 percent coming from a group other than the non-Hispanic, single-race white group (*Millennials Outnumber Baby Boomers*). This is a fact that will become crucial when examining the classical arts continuously decline in popularity. According to the 2017 Current Population Survey from Pew Research Center, the millennial generation had the lowest percentage of marriage with only 37 percent of the generation's members being married. Millennials also had the highest percentage of individuals who are not married with 57 percent. In that same study, they found that the most popular events credited with the way that Millennials were shaped and influenced include the technological explosion of the internet and social media, 9/11 and school-related gun violence.

The Millennial Mindset

When describing Millennials, one would use terms like: diverse, upbeat, confident and technological savvy. Millennials are from a period of advanced technological growth allowing them to be in constant contact with the world, leading them to being a generation that is more connected to one another and placing high importance on the social aspect of being together. “Gen Y is a sociable and confident generation” and “are natural networkers who effortlessly navigate the digital world” allowing “information travel quickly through their communication networks” (Tanner).

The Arts Community Alliance, or TACA, is an organization based in Texas that provides funding and other necessary resources to nonprofit arts organizations. Their mission is to “support excellence and impact in the arts through grant-making, capacity building, and thought

leadership” (Our Impact). They achieve this “by providing flexible funding and much needed resources, like professional development workshops” (About TACA) This allows arts organizations to focus “less time on keeping their doors open and more time on running strong effective programs” (About TACA). According to a study conducted by TACA, in which they interviewed Millennials, 73 percent of Millennials confessed to checking their smartphones a few times an hour every day. 78 percent prefer paying for desirable experiences over buying physical objects they desire. Millennials opted for arts experiences that “gives me a chance to socialize with friends,” and “do something different, be exposed to something new, as well as be a part of the culture” (*Brave New Audience*). According to the Millennials who attend events for the social aspect, “experiencing high-quality arts is of relatively less importance,” (*Brave New Audience*).

According to a study performed by the Wallace Foundation on Millennials audiences in performing arts found that Millennials engage within the performing arts to help them “feel transcendental -- a part of something bigger, feel alive and present, forget themselves and get away from day-to-day stress, enhance their sense of self or self-identity” (*Building Millennial Audiences*). In the same study, Millennials also cite that arts performances with connections to progressive social values that aligned with their values were high in priority when deciding on which arts they participate in (*Building Millennial Audiences*).

The Classical Arts

Classical arts refers to the arts that came out of the classicism period in antiquity in the Western world that focus on elegance and symmetry (*Art Movements*). Classicism illustrates the

formal and restrained tastes of the period and represents the classical ideals from Greece and Rome (*Art History*). Characteristics of classical art include: harmony, clarity, restraint, universality and idealism (Classicism and Neoclassicism).

The first category of classical arts that will be discussed more in depth is classical music. Classical music refers to two different sets of music, the first definition being a broader term for all the music since the beginning of instrumental music in church in 1000 AD, the second definition focusing on a period where music came back to being lighter and simpler. For this paper, we will be using classical music outlined in the first definition, referring to classical music in terms of a genre with subgenres beneath it including: Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical and Romantic. Classical music is most commonly known for its “highly sophisticated instrumental music” and “may also contain mixed instrumental and vocal styles” (Classical Music Genres). Classical music’s style places a great emphasis on beauty, elegance and balance. Other musical characteristics include short well-balanced melodies and clear-cut question and answer phrases. Notable classical musicians are Mozart, Beethoven, Bach and Haydn (Fuller).

The views of hip-hop in the classical arts are very much split. Younger, more diverse classical musicians appreciate what hip-hop has to offer, while the older classical musicians do not consider hip-hop as an art form, less a serious one. The older views of hip-hop in the classical art world can be best summarized with the following quote by Sir Kenneth Clark, a British art historian and critic, “a violent emphasis or a sudden acceleration of rhythmic movement would have destroyed those qualities of balance and completeness” (Clark). In 2018, Kendrick Lamar won the Pulitzer Prize for music. “Mr. Lamar is not only the first rapper to win the award since the Pulitzer’s expanded to music in 1943, but he is also the first winner who is

not a classical or jazz musician” (Coscarelli). This split the classical world in half. “The news of the prize sent a jolt through the classical music world,” according to the New York Times article, “some pooh-poohed Mr. Lamar’s win – one classical composer called it ‘insulting’” (Coscarelli). Half of the classical musicians praised Lamar for his “virtuosic song collection unified by its vernacular authenticity and rhythmic dynamism that offers affecting vignettes capturing the complexity of modern African-American life” according to the board of the Pulitzer Prize. Kendrick Lamar’s win was a “big moment for hip-hop”. It provided validity for the art form as a legitimate artistic form. “It shines a light on hip-hop in a completely different way” according to Dana Canedy, the administrator of the prizes. In an interview with a classical composer Alexis Ffrench, “classical music suffers from a sense of entitlement” (Glynn). The Washington Post also covered Kendrick Lamar’s historic win. In the article, Alyssa Rosenberg, writer for The Washington Post, interviewed classical composer, writer and performer Alex Temple about his experience within the classical music world. When asked about the reactions in regards to Lamar’s win, Temple said that it was “all over the map”. Some praised Lamar for his win and praised the Pulitzer Prize for “moving beyond its limited focus” on classical music. He also noted the other side, “there are people saying that hip-hop doesn’t even count as music; I even saw one trot out the old cliché that ‘you can’t spell crap with rap’” (Rosenberg).

The National Endowment for the Arts conducts a survey of public participation in the arts every decade. The survey looks in depth at arts participation and the demographics of the audience in attendance. The most recent survey comes from 2002 to 2012. According to the National Endowment for the Arts’ survey of public participation in the arts in regards to the classical arts, adults ages 65 to 74 had the highest attendance rates than any other ages,

non-Hispanic white adults had the highest rate of attendance over any other racial or ethnic group, adults with a high level of education also had higher attendance rates than less-educated adults, and lastly, more than a third of classical arts' audiences have an annual income of \$100,000 or higher (*How a Nation Engages with Art*). To summarize the findings of the National Endowment for the Arts' survey result, classical arts are most popular to rich, educated, older, white people. In contrast to the young, highly diverse people that make up the Millennial generation, who have the lowest attendance of classical arts.

“Benchmark” arts, according to the National Endowment for the Arts, are the following art forms: jazz, classical music, opera, musical and non-musical plays, ballets and museums. Those arts are considered “benchmark” because the length of time they have been around allows for them to be measured and compared with more ease than other more recent arts. These “benchmark” arts have been tracked by the NEA since 1982. For the purpose of the survey of public participation in the arts, classical music is defined as symphony, chamber or choral music. According to the survey's findings, “across the board, regional rates of attendance for selected arts activities (the “benchmark” arts events) were much lower in 2012 than 2002” (*A Decade of Arts Engagement*). Dance, not including ballet, is the only performing art that did not fall between 2002 and 2012. The “benchmarks” arts attendance record shows a trend of increasing as the age of the attendee's increases. As Millennials began to enter into young adulthood, the National Endowment for the Arts changed the way they categorized arts attendance by separating out outdoor festivals into its own category. The outdoor festival category was first introduced in 2008 and then measured again in 2012. In 2008, the percentage of U.S. adults attending ballet and classical music performance was 2.9 and 9.3, respectively. And in 2012, the

percentage of U.S. adults attending ballet and classical music performance was 2.7 and 8.8, respectively. In 2008, the percentage of U.S. adults attending outdoor festivals was 20.8 and in 2012 remained the same. Of those who attended live music performances, 43.6 percent attended a pop or rock music show, the most common genre of live music in 2012 (A Decade of Arts Engagement).

The Wallace Foundation study showed there was a decline in arts attendance among the Millennials than previous generations at the same age. Among these arts forms were classical music, non-musical plays, and ballet with a decline between 30 and 44 percent (*Building Millennial Audiences*). When questioned, Millennials expressed multiple concerns including, not liking the type of performance or program, not feeling comfortable at location, and preference for other entertainment styles. In conclusion the study states, “Millennials are willing to spend more freely for rock concerts or other special events they know they’ll enjoy. They will not spend as much for an event they’re not sure about” (*Building Millennial Audiences*). “Classical music does not feed [Millennials’] driving need to socialize,” is a summary of the comments from qualitative research reports while The Wallace Foundation conducted their study. When asked 55 percent of Millennials agreed with the quote, “being able to socialize with friends is an important part of the performing arts experience” (*Building Millennial Audiences*). Classical music performances and ballets are losing the attention of Millennials because those arts forms are not what Millennials refer to as the “complete experience”, meaning there is little to no opportunity to socialize and lacks drinks and food. Millennials are inclined to attend “buzz-worthy” events. “Buzz-worthy” are events that are deemed impressive by the majority of society which can include unique and special perks, access to popular performers and/or a

special venue. Attendance to these events allows Millennials the appearance of being trendy, both on- and off-line. As a participant in The Wallace Foundation study noted: “There’s not a lot of bragging rights associated with going to the opera or ballet. You don’t want to roll in on Monday morning and be like, ‘Yo, you should have been at this ballet’”. Millennials also want a performance with no formality, like formal dress code or ambience. Millennials described the classical arts as old-fashioned, pretentious, and out-of-place (*Building Millennial Audiences*).

Nielsen Music does reports every six months which compares genres in the music industry as well as giving a breakdown of the consumption into both physical and digital consumption as well as overall popularity in terms of overall consumption. In the 2018 mid-year report, classical music made up 1.1% of all music consumption, landing it the title of least popular genre (Mid-Year Report U.S. 2017).

The Art of Hip-Hop

To understand hip-hop it is important to understand how it began. Hip-hop is more than what meets the eye, it is a cultural movement and a musical phenomenon. Hip-hop started in the Bronx, New York in the 1970s and gained popularity throughout the 1980s and 1990s into the 21st century. The older generations at the time, did not pay attention to hip-hop because they thought it was just a phase that would not have last let alone have the impact that it has had on society. Hip-hop is known for its four iconic elements: deejaying, MCing, breakdancing, or what is known as b-boying, and graffiti. Hip-hop’s MCing musical style became “the movement’s most lasting and influential art form” (Tate). DJ Kool Herc is one of the few people credited with the creation of hip-hop. DJ Kool Herc’s story is that he was tired of the older people’s music, at

the time disco, and decided to take some disco records and separate out the beats and played them on loops with rhythmic speaking on top. Hip-hop was created with a rebellious motive and continues to maintain this spirit. Hip-hop gained popularity as a way to combat the increase in drug use and violence in the streets. Hip-hop musicians use hip-hop as their opportunity to have a voice and an outlet to express themselves in the world.

In 2017, Hip-hop surpassed Rock as the most popular music genre in the United States. Hip-hop accounted for 20.9% of all music consumption compared to the 19.8% consumption of Rock. In 2018, Hip-hop continued to pull ahead in terms of consumption with a percentage of 24.7 compared to the even lower Rock percentage of 11.7 (Leight).

According to BuzzAngle Music's year-end report 2019, which looks at the U.S. consumption within the music industry, the genre of hip-hop continued to dominate the charts in 2019. Hip-hop took over the charts with six out of the top 10 songs of the year belonging to its genre. 2019's album of the year was *Hollywood's Bleeding* by Post Malone, the song of the year was *Old Town Road* by Lil Nas X and the Artist of the year was Post Malone, all which are categorized as hip-hop (Year-End Report 2019).

The Performing Arts Center at Purchase College

There are some artistic groups, the ones listed above are just a few examples, that have begun to incorporate popular hip-hop elements into classical art forms. From dance to music, these highly-regarded artists are known for bringing the world of hip-hop to classical spaces. It is providing a level of validity to hip-hop as a respected art form to audiences attending classical

events in performing arts venues. By doing this the hip-hop infused art is being exposed to audiences and venues that it normally would not have.

The Purchase College Performing Arts Center (PAC) is “the major professional, non-profit arts presenter in the Southeastern New York - Southwestern Connecticut region” located on the Purchase College, SUNY campus (About The Center). The mission of The PAC is to “encourage and advance the public knowledge and appreciation of theatre, music, opera and dance” and “to develop excellence in the performing arts by supporting professional artists and students in the creation and study of new works in an artistic atmosphere utilizing first rate performing facilities” (Performing Arts Center Foundation Inc.) According to Seth Soloway, the director at The PAC, the goal with the programming and target audience is to create an atmosphere similar to that you might find in one’s living room. He is working to break the barriers between the performers and the audience, so that they can engage in conversation. The most predominant audience of The PAC would be categorized as mature, wealthy, white people living in Westchester County. The PAC has been trying to reach a younger, more diverse audience which can be seen in its more recent programming with the Spotlight on Mexico series and other events that focus on current topics like *It Gets Better*. *IGB* focuses on LGBT+ rights and equality through a musical performance by The San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus to appeal to a young, diverse audience to spark conversation. Each season, The PAC holds an annual Gala selected to precede a “hot” event that will engage the most people and potential donors.

The Performing Arts Center is a nonprofit campus arts presenter in terms of its business model. The Performing Arts Center is an arts presenter; the definition of an arts presenter is “an organization, or a department or program of a larger organization, that works to facilitate

exchanges between artists and audiences through creative, educational, and performance opportunities” (Arts Programming). Another important note about arts presenters is that the majority of artistic work being presented is created outside of the presenting organization, but the presenter can also co-commission art pieces. One of the determining factors in what type of art is presented by an organization is whether the organization is nonprofit or for-profit. Arts organizations that are non-profit, like The Performing Arts Center, have to be mission driven. This means the art presented cannot just be driven by the desire to make money, it has to be serving a larger goal, or the organization’s mission. For The Performing Arts Center there is a certain level of expectation, or “excellence”, when it comes to the art and artists being presented. When hip-hop is brought into venues like The Performing Arts Center, it makes a statement to audiences that attend traditional classical performances about what is recognized as high caliber art. Hip-hop in their eyes becomes validated as a legitimate art form. The combination of hip-hop and classical is becoming more popular for venues that cater to both old and new art lovers.

Black Violin

Black Violin is a popular classically influenced hip-hop duo. Black Violin was created by violinist Kevin Marcus and violist Wil B. The Black Violin duo were trained classically on their instruments, but soon started incorporating their classical background with hip-hop elements. According to Wil B., “this hip-hop classical thing was us. It was different, and it’s cool to take something people think they know and make it different,” (Pompilio). Black Violin was created to defy the stereotypes surrounding both hip-hop and classical music and “while classical music and hip-hop may seem worlds apart, both are meant to bring people together” (Totty). Their goal

is to bring together a diverse crowd of people who wouldn't necessarily come together on their own and hopefully it will help keep classical music alive for the next generation.

Wilner Baptiste, or more popularly known as Wil B, began his musical journey when he originally wanted to learn saxophone, but was placed into a string class by what he thought was an accident. Wil B decided to embrace this random act and stayed in the strings class. He chose the instrument that no one seemed interested in, the viola. “[Wil B] was the only person who wanted to play the viola. So [he] picked that up, and 20 years later [he’s] still playing it” (Totty). Later in 2012, Wil B shared that it was not an accident that he was placed in the wrong class, rather a bet that the orchestra teacher and the band teacher had during a game of golf. The terms were simple, whoever won their game of golf would get to have Wil B in their class.

Kevin Sylvester, or Kev, is the other half of the dynamic duo Black Violin alongside Wil B. Kev plays the violin, a smaller instrument that has a slightly higher pitch (5 Differences). The two met in high-school orchestra class. It is in this class that they studied classical music and began to admire the great composers, such as Johann Sebastian Bach. According to Kev, “It started for [Kev] with Bach, ‘cause Bach is the equalizer . . . Bach is the hardest thing you can play, because he exposes everything about you. He exposes your weaknesses and makes you work harder. [he] always thinks of Bach as, like, the closest composer to divinity” (Totty). Bach is a baroque-era composer respected for his musical complexities and stylistic innovations. He is widely considered one of the greatest Western composers of all time. (Johann Sebastian Bach Biography). Bach is also famously known for composing “Tocatta and Fugue in D minor” which has been sampled in multiple songs including many hip-hop records like “Brainless” by hip-hop

artist Eminem in 2013 and “Watch Ya Self” by hip-hop duo Mobb Deep in 2009 (Samples of Toccata).

Black Violin currently has four albums out: *Black Violin* (2008), *Classically Trained* (2012), *Stereotypes* (2015), and *Take the Stairs* (2019). *Classically Trained* was the second LP released by Black Violin in 2012. On the album, the duo “interrupts the barriers between genres” (Morgan Rogers). The album has Black Violin’s *Stereotypes* was their third LP release, but their first major-label debut. According to Black Violin’s official website, *Stereotypes* will “much more likely appeal to open-minded hip-hop devotees and those with eclectic tastes than to strict classical fans” (*Stereotypes*). Black Violin’s most recent album, *Take the Stairs*, dropped on November 1, 2019. The new album has been well received. It debuted number one on the classical crossover chart on billboard and stayed there for ten weeks. This is not the first time one of Black Violin’s albums peaked at number one on the chart. *Stereotypes* also peaked at number one on the classical crossover chart back in 2015 (Black Violin...Chart History). According to Kev and Wil B., *Take the Stairs* is “very much an album of its time looking for a positivity that sorely lacking from popular discourse” (Graff). An article by Billboard that reviews the new album stated, “*Take the Stairs* continues to celebrate Black Violin’s genre-less approach to music” (Graff). Another review stated, “It’s quite remarkable that the electronic drum loops, additional electronic effects, and their two-stringed instruments can sound so big – a veritable two-man orchestra (Hynes). Black Violin received national exposure when they performed with Alicia Keys at the Billboard Awards in 2004. The Billboard Awards are awards given annually by *Billboard*, a music publication. The awards are part of the “Big Three” major music awards, along with The American Music Awards and the Grammy Awards (Billboard). In 2005, two

years after their first submission, Black Violin appeared on and won the “Showtime at The Apollo” competition. Their music was continuously growing popular among mainstream artists. This exposure led the duo to appear on multiple tours with artists like Kanye West and Jay-Z, two artists who are highly regarded in the hip-hop industry (Classically Trained Hip-Hop Duo).

The last tour of Black Violin was Fall of 2019. It was well documented on Black Violin’s Instagram page with a post from each performance of the musicians on stage and the audience in the background. The comment section is filled with praise for the performers. Some of the comments are: “Beautiful show”, “Thank You for giving us some amazing top notch high quality music!!!”, “You all NEVER disappoint my lil Bros!”, “So much fun!!!! Can’t wait to see you guys back!!! The show was out of this world!!!”, “Phenomenal Show!”.



Source for all images: @Blackviolin on Instagram

The images above come straight from @BlackViolin on Instagram. These images are some of the performance shots posted to their page in which hundreds of testimonial comments can be found from audience members. The images also serve as visual confirmation of the diversity of their audience members. The audience ranges from African American to Caucasian to Latinx, including both females and males.

Black Violin has become a staple in The Performing Arts Center’s season. Each year, Black Violin is asked to return for a performance that is guaranteed to sell out. For the

2019-2020 season at The PAC Black Violin's performance is tied to The PAC's Gala. According to Seth Soloway, the Gala is always attached to the "hot" event that will engage the most people and potential donors to rally support for the future seasons at The PAC. During an interview with The PAC's marketing director, Mara Rupners, talked about how the performance following the Gala is a representation of where The PAC would like to go in the future. Mara Rupners also noted the differences between the audiences at Black Violin compared to the performances by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Based on Mara Rupners' observations Black Violin's audience is more mixed that tends to have younger and diverse audience members. While the audience is typically younger, there are a handful of older, more traditional patrons who can be described as "super loyal" to The PAC and "adventurous" (Rupners).

RUBBERBANDance Group

In 2002, Victor Quijada founded his own dance group RUBBERBANDance Group. RUBBERBANDance Group is a dance company based in Montreal, Canada and is known for its new style of dance that is inspired by "breakdancing, classical ballet, and dance theatre" (The Company). When asked why the name RUBBERBANDance during an interview with The Performing Arts Center, Victor said:

"When I was a teenager, I used to perform with a rap group and they gave me the name 'rubberband' for my dance style that was loose and off-kilter. During that same period, I was being mentored by Rudy Perez, a member of the Judson Church Theatre Group who

helped establish postmodern dance in the late 60s and 70s. Working with Perez while still being heavily immersed in the Los Angeles Hip Hop scene is what planted the seeds that would later become my life's work. For me, 'rubberband' signifies a moment in my personal history where my underground hip hop world collided with the world of postmodern ideals and high art concepts. It's my personal 'big bang' explosion that I still channel for inspiration to this day" (Five Questions).

Victor began as a b-boy dancing in hip-hop clubs and on the streets of Los Angeles, CA. A b-boy is "a male who engages in the pursuit of hip-hop culture or adopts its styles" (B-Boy). The term b-boy originates from the act of breakdancing, which is the "b" in b-boy. Breakdancing is "composed of distinct breaking movements, such as toprock, downrock, power moves and freezes" (Jordan). Victor Quijada was passionate about dance and making a career for himself through dance. In his 20s, he moved to New York City and started training classically in ballet. Victor thought that this was the only viable option in pursuing dance professionally. After only a few years of classical training he was invited to audition and then selected out of 900 dancers to join Twyla Tharp's company (Gaddy). Later he joined Montreal's Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, before forming his own dance company. When RUBBERBANDance Group was founded, Victor was able to combine his love for hip-hop with his classical training to create what he calls the "RUBBERBAND Method". This method came about by "deconstructing the choreographic principles he had learned by blending them with the raw ideology of his street dance origins" (The Company). According to Pentacle, "Los Angeles native Victor Quijada brings together classical dance composition and west coast hip-hop like no one before him" (RUBBERBAND). Pentacle is an organization that has been "promoting, connecting, managing, and facilitating the

live and careers of a broad range of performing artists/companies who reside in the U.S. and abroad” (About). Pentacle provides multifaceted programs that support the artists at “critical stages in their careers” (About). “Pentacle broadens the sphere of influence performing artists can attain” (About). “Fascinated by the raw dynamic of Hip Hop/break-dancing and the purity of classical formalism, Quijada has been demolishing barriers between these contrasting dance styles for more than 15 years now” (RBDG Method). At the age of 26, Victor Quijada was recognized by companies like THARP! and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal as “a magnetic and expansive” (Victor Quijada) dancer with “a rare perspective on a large spectrum of dance, possessing knowledge and experience that spans from the street corner to the concert hall” (Victor Quijada). In 2017, Victor won the prize for Cultural Diversity in Dance at Les Prix de la Danse de Montréal for “his role in as a precursor in bringing street dance into theatrical venues” (Victor Quijada, Winner of the Prize).

While Victor explores his choreographic and artistic vision with RUBBERBANDance Group, he also shares that vision with the public by teaching his RUBBERBAND method through workshops and internships at universities, dance conservatories, and festivals. “Coaching dancers to transition masterfully between opposing aesthetics: transposing balletic lines and graces, contemporary angles and distortion, capoeira-like fluidity and inversion, with hip hop dynamics and break power-moves” (Victor Quijada).

Like Black Violin, Instagram is a popular platform to post and interact with the Millennial audience. Comments can be found praising Victor Quijada and his dancers for their performances. “Brilliant performance and music”, “yesss vies mix was so good!!!”, “You were fantastic, congrats!”, “Incredible performance! Thank you!”, “Phenomenal show!!! So happy I

was able to attend!”, “Super rich show! Cohesive, detailed, transforming,” are just some of the comments beneath their posts.

The Hip Hop Nutcracker

Jennifer Weber is a choreographer and director who has created works that performed in New York, Los Angeles, and London. One of her most popular works is *The Hip Hop Nutcracker*, in which she is credited as co-creator, director, and choreographer. Her off-broadway choreography credits include *KPOP*, *Teenage Dick*, *Cruel Intentions*, *Stockholm*, *Fall for Dance Festival*. Jennifer Weber was recently nominated for an Olivier Award for best theatre choreographer for her work on *& Juliet* at the Shaftesbury Theatre in the United Kingdom. Her commercial choreography credits include Marc Jacobs, CK2, American Express, Uber, Ulta, L’Oreal, Reebok, Philosophy, and Lifetime’s *Bring It Live!* Tour. Some venues her work has been performed at are The Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, and The Apollo. In 2018, Jennifer was commissioned by the New York City Center, in which she worked with New York City Ballet principal dancer Tiler Peck and “hip hop legend” Lil Buck to reimagine Stravinsky’s *Petrushka* (Jennifer Weber). *The Hip Hop Nutcracker*, an international touring hit, “reimagines Tchaikovsky’s classical score through explosive hip hop choreography” (*The Hip Hop Nutcracker*). A review from CBS stated, “The Hip Hop Nutcracker turns Tchaikovsky on his head, in the coolest way possible way” (*The Hip Hop Nutcracker*). According to Jennifer Weber, “the show’s audience includes families and people of all ages, and draws fans from both genres” and that “the appeal lies with the fact that it is an unexpected pairing, and that the presence of each genre highlights something new and special about the other” (Chanatry). A review from

The New York Times stated that The Hip Hop Nutcracker is “a generous dose of contemporary spirit sure to heat up even the most restless and wintry of souls” (The Hip Hop Nutcracker). The Hip Hop Nutcracker’s Instagram has comments from Millennials that went to various performances throughout this past season. Comments like: “It was fantastic! Highly recommend!!”, “Amazing”, “This was such a great experience.”, and “Entire show was amazing”.

Conclusion

As hip-hop continues to take over the music industry, it is important to recognize the popularity and validity of the art form. Hip-hop is a cultural movement of the Millennial generation. To engage the Millennial generation and to keep the classical arts alive, it is crucial to incorporate hip-hop elements into the classical arts, bringing people of all ages and backgrounds together. It is redefining the way that people think of the classical arts. It is allowing new styles of art to enter into traditional venues. Incorporating hip-hop into classical art forms is positively affecting Millennial arts consumption.

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