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## Marshall Artists Series features Hubbard Street Dance Chicago on Thursday

By Bill Lynch [lynch@hdmediallc.com](mailto:lynch@hdmediallc.com)

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The Hubbard Street Dance Chicago troupe is scheduled to perform in Huntington this week as part of the Marshall Artists Series.

MICHELLE REID | Courtesy photo

Coming back after pandemic lockdowns, artists had to work hard to get ready to perform in front of an audience or even with each other.

Linda-Denise Fisher-Harrell, artistic director of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, said for months, companies couldn't even meet to rehearse.

"People were dancing in their kitchens and their living rooms," she said. "For a long time during COVID, people weren't jumping. So, there was muscle atrophy and things that happen when you don't use all the muscles you're accustomed to using."

Fisher-Harrell, who brings the dance company to Huntington on Thursday night for the Marshall Artists Series, said when she took the director's job in 2021, she worked with her dancers online.

Fisher-Harrell was in her studio, and they were wherever they called home.

When they were able to be in one place again, everyone had to recondition their bodies and get back into dance shape. That took a while. Then they had to contend with dancing while wearing a mask.

"So, you know, these are incredible artist-athletes, right? Dancing with the passion and exuberance," Fisher-Harrell said. "But you had these breathing issues and endurances like how do I get my air, how do I get my oxygen?"

With frequent tests and exposures, just keeping regular rehearsals was a challenge, but Fisher-Harrell said they kept going and got her first season as creative director completed.

"It was fabulous and it was crazy," she laughed.

And she was ready to do it again. She hoped her second season with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago would be even more fabulous and a little crazier, but in a good way.

Fisher-Harrell said she still felt a little new to the job, though she thought she had a good insight into how the company worked from both sides of the stage. Before she joined the company as creative director, she'd been a dancer with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, though not recently.

She laughed and said, "No. There was some time in between that."

Fisher-Harrell danced with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago in the late 1980s and early 1990s before going on to dance with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater led by dancer and choreographer Judith Jamison.

She stayed with that company for 13 years before taking a job as a dance professor at Towson University in her hometown of Baltimore, Maryland.

After leaving Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Fisher-Harrell ran dance camps, presented dance companies and did a thousand other things that she thought helped her as artistic director.

“It just feels amazing to be back at my home, my first dance home, in this position,” she said. “I feel like this is a place where I can make an impact.”

Becoming the director has meant charting the company’s artistic direction. Over its 40-plus years, the company had developed a reputation and worked with a number of well-known choreographers like Twyla Tharp, Nacho Duato, Aszure Barton and more.

Fisher-Harrell wanted to leave her own mark on the repertoire, but she was approaching it carefully.

“I think what happens is sometimes people take over, they instantly change things without any respect to the culture. You know, so I’ve spent this first year really trying to absorb what’s going on,” she said.

The director said she asked questions like, “Why do we do this? What’s the historical story about this?”

She didn’t go in looking to knock everything down.

“But one thing I wanted to do immediately was make the company more diverse,” Fisher-Harrell said. “I wanted to diversity the repertory.”

Hubbard Street Dance Company is working with many of the same choreographers they’ve worked with in the past, but she said they’ve added a few more names to that list.

“I wanted to shake that up a little bit,” she said. “I wanted to bring some choreographers who may not have had the opportunity to choreograph for Hubbard Street before and you’ll see some of those choreographers when you come to the show. We’re bringing a wider body of work.”

Thursday night’s performance includes pieces by Amy Hall Garner, Kyle Abraham, Spenser Theberge, Ohad Naharin and Barton.

After that performance, the company has a series of shows that will eventually take them far from the cold of winter. Mid-February, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago heads to Chicago for five days before going to Laguna Beach, California, and then to Hawaii.

Fisher-Harrell laughed about that. She was excited.

“Hawaii in February,” the director said. “I can’t think of anything more perfect.”

Tickets may be ordered via telephone by calling the box office at 304-696-6656 or online at Ticketmaster.com. The Marshall Artists Series box office is located in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse on 5th Avenue across from Marshall University’s Student Center. Box office hours are Monday through Friday, noon to 4 p.m.

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## If You Go

The Marshall Artist Series present Hubbard Street Dance Chicago

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Thursday

WHERE: Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center, Huntington

TICKETS: \$65

INFO: [marshall.edu](http://marshall.edu) or [ticketmaster.com](http://ticketmaster.com)

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