



Around Fort Wayne 2.0

Dance Theatre of Harlem traveling exhibition at the FWMoA starting 12/20/2014

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Forty-year retrospective of highlighting the development and accomplishments of the seminal Dance Theatre of Harlem

Traveling Exhibition opening in Fort Wayne December 20

(December 12, 2014) – Fort Wayne Museum of Art in Fort Wayne, IN is pleased to announce Dance Theatre of Harlem: 40 Years of Firsts, an exhibition that highlights the many accomplishments of African Americans and other minorities who dared to overcome social norms and prejudices to pursue their passion and pave the way for future generations of world class dancers. Organized by Dance Theatre of Harlem, California African American Museum, and The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and toured by International Arts & Artists, Washington D.C., Dance Theatre of Harlem is on view at Fort Wayne Museum of Art from December 20, 2014 through March 15, 2015



The colorful history and powerful social and artistic impact of the renowned ballet company and school is brought to life in the exhibition's more than 250 objects, including costumes, historical photographs, set pieces, and documentary video excerpts from four dramatically-staged ballets that are iconic to the company: *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Creole Giselle*, *Douglas* and *Firebird*.



In addition to the costumes and staged ballets, exhibition highlights include numerous artifacts including original tour programs, letters from choreographers and dignitaries, magazine articles, design bibles, more than 20 original tour posters from the company's New York City and worldwide touring seasons over the decades—including Dance Theatre of Harlem's (DTH) first performance in New York City at the Guggenheim Museum and their first international tour—and an overview of Arthur Mitchell's career and accomplishments. The exhibition also contains a large one-of-a-kind quilt with embroidered images of signature DTH ballets, and patrons can view a BBC documentary on Arthur Mitchell and Dance Theatre of Harlem.

In writing about the vibrancy and impressive talent of Dance Theatre of Harlem in 1969, *The New York Times'* former chief dance critic, Clive Barnes, began his article with the following rhetorical question, "Black is beautiful, classic ballet is beautiful, so why are the two so rarely found together?"



Later that year such rarity ceased to exist when the Dance Theatre of Harlem was founded in New York City. Following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Arthur Mitchell—a Harlem native and principal dancer with the New York City Ballet—was moved to give back to his Harlem neighborhood by offering local youth access to success in life through the focus and discipline of classical ballet. He enlisted his mentor and renowned ballet teacher, Karel Shook, to join him in developing a dance school. Soon after, Dance Theatre of Harlem was born. DTH's eclectic teachings include classical, ethnic, modern and contemporary styles; and the enormously-talented dancers who defied gravity and stereotyping quickly set them apart from other ballet companies. Dance Theatre of Harlem became one of the most sought-after dance companies by the leading impresarios, opera houses and performance venues around the world.

In 2009, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center, in collaboration with Dance Theatre of Harlem, presented a smaller yet comprehensive exhibition that brought to the Vincent Astor Gallery at Lincoln Center, 40 years of art and accomplishment in the form of rare costumes, photos and other memorabilia. Following this showing in New York City, the exhibition was redesigned by the California African American Museum (CAAM) for its West Coast premiere, which ran at CAAM from February 4, 2010 through June 6, 2010, before traveling to the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History (June 16, 2011 to January 16, 2012), and the University Museum at Texas Southern University (February 1, 2013 to April 30, 2013).



These partners have now collaborated with International Arts & Artists for a new national tour that begins January 18, 2014 at the Irving Arts Center, Irving, Texas, and will be on display through March 16, 2014. It then travels to the National Museum of Dance, Saratoga Springs, New York (April 11, 2014 – September 9, 2014). For updated tour locations visit <http://www.artsandartists.org/exhibitions-dancetheaterofharlem.php>.

Dance Theatre of Harlem is organized by Dance Theatre of Harlem, California African American Museum, and The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and toured by International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC.



Judy Tyrus and Barbara Cohen-Stratyner co-curated the exhibition in 2009 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Dance Theatre of Harlem.

About Judy Tyrus

Judy Tyrus is the exhibition curator and archivist at Dance Theatre of Harlem, and Adjunct Professor of Dance at Marymount Manhattan College, NYC. Originally from Oakland, California, Ms. Tyrus joined the Dance Theatre of Harlem in 1977 where she performed as a principal dancer until 1999. In 2007, her work as a volunteer alumni coordinator for DTH surfaced a need for the organization's vast archival collection. Having been selected by the Dance Heritage Fund as one of seven companies to receive assistance, and with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Ms. Tyrus recently completed an extensive inventory of DTH's significant audio and visual collection.

About Barbara Cohen-Stratyner

Barbara Cohen-Stratyner serves as the Judy R. and Alfred A. Rosenberg Curator of Exhibitions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. She has curated over 70 exhibitions on the performing arts in LPA's galleries at Lincoln Center. Ms. Cohen-Stratyner holds a Ph.D. in Performance Studies and M.F.A. in Theater Design from New York University, and an MS in Leadership in Museum Education, Bank Street College. She has taught at City College of New York, Parsons School/The New School, and Seton Hall University. Active in the museum community, she is the immediate past chair of the American Alliance of Museum's Professional Network on Diversity, and a member of the Steering Committees for the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums and the Museum Access Consortium.

About the Dance Theatre of Harlem

Dance Theatre of Harlem is about using the art form of classical ballet to change people's lives. Through performances by the internationally acclaimed company, training in their world-class school, and participation in their multi-faceted arts education program, Dance Theatre of Harlem has made a difference in the world for 43 years.

Inspired to bring new opportunity to the lives of the young people in the Harlem neighborhood in which he grew up, Arthur Mitchell and Karel Shook founded the Dance Theatre of Harlem in the basement of a church in 1969. Mitchell, who had found success as a principal dancer with the renowned New York City Ballet, understood the power of training in a classical art form to bring discipline and focus to a challenged community. Dance Theatre of Harlem's unprecedented success, as a racially diverse company, school and source of arts education, was built on creating innovative and bold new forms of artistic expression. Through these varied artistic interactions, DTH ambassadors have helped to build character and have provided valuable life skills to countless people in New York City, across the country and around the world.

As Dance Theatre of Harlem traverses its fifth decade, they remain committed to excellence and are dedicated to reaching new audiences with a message of self-reliance, self-expression and individual responsibility through the re-launch of the Dance Theatre of Harlem Company.

Now under the leadership of a second generation of artists inspired by Arthur Mitchell's vision, founding member and former prima ballerina, Virginia Johnson, acts as artistic director for DTH; and the former school director and choreographer, Laveen Naidu, is acting executive director.

About The California African American Museum

The California African American Museum (CAAM) researches, collects, preserves and interprets for public enrichment the history, art and culture of African Americans. Chartered by the California State Legislature in 1977, CAAM is a state supported institution and a partner with the 501(c)(3) non-profit organization Friends, the Foundation of the California African American Museum. In addition to its permanent collection of over 3,000 objects of art, artifacts and historical documents, CAAM also houses a research library containing more than 20,000 volumes, employs and trains high school students through its Young Docents program, and hosts in-house curated exhibitions and traveling exhibitions on a regular basis. The museum also tours CAAM exhibitions throughout California and the nation.

About The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts is the world's largest archival and circulating collection in music, dance, theater and recorded sound. LPA welcomes over 300,000 visitors—performing arts professionals, students, and fans—each year to its Lincoln Center

facility. It houses the collections, over 200 public programs and screenings, and a robust exhibition schedule. The Performing Arts Museum exhibitions have been seen in Asia, Europe, and across North America.

About International Arts & Artists

International Arts & Artists in Washington, DC, is a non-profit arts service organization dedicated to increasing cross-cultural understanding and exposure to the arts internationally through exhibitions, programs and services to artists, arts institutions and the public.

Visit www.artsandartists.org.