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Fort Wayne Museum of Art exhibit offers multisensory look at Dance Theatre of Harlem

By [Kevin Kilbane](#) of The News-Sentinel
Thursday, December 18, 2014 - 12:01 am

The Fort Wayne Museum of Art wants to create most of its exhibits on its own. But when staff members were offered a chance to book the exhibit “Dance Theatre of Harlem: 40 Years of Firsts,” they couldn't say no.

“It just seems so exciting,” Amanda Martin, the museum's deputy director of administration and communications, said of the traveling exhibit, which opens Saturday.

Much of the excitement stems from the multiple dimensions of the exhibit: Its more than 250 objects include costumes, historical photos, set pieces, tour programs and posters, documentary video excerpts from four ballets associated with the dance company, and more.

“It's going to appeal to people with a lot of different interests,” Martin said, such as art, history, African-American culture, fashion and dance.

“Dance Theatre of Harlem” fits well with the art museum's mission to provide meaningful exhibit experiences for all audiences in the community, she said.

Dance Theatre of Harlem was founded in 1969 by Arthur Mitchell, a Harlem native and then a principal dancer with the New York City Ballet, an exhibit news release said. He saw classical ballet training as a way to help young people find success and opportunity by learning focus and discipline.



More Information

Amazing artistry

WHAT: The art exhibit “Dance Theatre of Harlem: 40 Years of Firsts” features costumes, posters, artifacts and more from the renowned New York City dance company.

WHEN: Saturday through March 15. Museum hours are 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays, except open until 8 p.m. Thursdays, and noon-5 p.m. Sundays. Closed Mondays and Christmas and New Year's days.

WHERE: Fort Wayne Museum of Art, 311 E. Main St.

COST: \$5 additional special exhibit fee for nonmembers; included with admission for members. Regular admission is \$7, adults; \$5, students in prekindergarten through college; \$5, ages 65 and older; \$20, families; and free, members. Admission is free to all 5-8 p.m. Thursdays and \$1 for all on the last Saturday of the month. Admission also is free Tuesdays-Sundays for all U.S. military personnel, U.S. military veterans and their families, with military ID.

INFORMATION: www.fwmoa.org or 422-6467

Special events

Special events being held in conjunction with the exhibit include:

- 6-9 p.m. Jan. 23, Winter Party, with food by Catablu and live music by Alicia Pyle Quartet; cost: \$12, guests, \$5, members.
- 12:15 p.m. Feb. 5, Curator's tour of the exhibit and talk by Charles Shepard, museum president, CEO and chief curator. Free with museum admission.
- Noon-5 p.m. March 14, “The Art of Hair,” workshops and demonstrations celebrate the natural beauty of hair. Cost is \$15 per person; tickets go on sale in February.
- 6:30 p.m. March 19, performance of a portion of their repertoire by the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, which will be in residency March 19-21 with Fort Wayne Dance Collective. Hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar provided; cost: \$10 per person.

With the help of his ballet teacher, Karel Shook, Mitchell started the program in a church basement, the news release said. Dance Theatre of Harlem grew to produce renowned performances and to tour worldwide. It offers training in ballet, ethnic, modern and contemporary dance.

The traveling exhibit was organized by Dance Theatre of Harlem, the California African American Museum in Los Angeles and the New York Public Library, the news release said.

While all of the items are interesting, Martin really looks forward to seeing the costumes in person. They include beautiful, elaborate headpieces and ballet tutus. "How can you not be dazzled by something like that ..., and also the history," she said.