



Dance Theatre of Harlem company dancers in "Return."

JEFF CRAVOTTA

GUILD HALL: *Dance Theatre of Harlem Debuts in East Hampton*

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"I'm from the generation of 'children are seen and not heard,'" Garland said. "While that might have been an admirable way of management at that time, it actually is quite detrimental to the well being of young people. I always give my dancers the space to express themselves ... I'm very much a listener in terms of my relationship to my dancers."

Founded by Arthur Mitchell (the first Black principal dancer at New York City Ballet and a protege of George Balanchine) and Karel Shook (ballet master and choreographer) in 1969, the Dance Theatre of Harlem has been staying true to its legacy for the past 56 years — to be a "haven for dancers of all colors who craved training, performance experience and an opportunity to excel in the classical ballet world."

Garland explained that back when the

company was founded, people often pressured Mitchell to make a distinction in the company: Was it a dance company, or a social service organization?

"Arthur would always ask, 'why can't it be both?'" Garland said. "Why couldn't he have both the art, which is there to uplift people, and also have an institution that serves the community? The beauty of 2025 is that this concept doesn't sound crazy — it makes perfect sense."

Garland explained that the upcoming residency will be an opportunity for the company to engage both the community of the East End and the art form of ballet itself through various events.

A Guild Hall KidFest program, in partnership with the Bridgehampton Child Care & Recreational Center, took place on Wednesday of this week, with an introductory ballet class taught by Garland, mixed with Harlem and music

history. Garland said he is excited to have the opportunity to "turn young people into dance fans."

On Friday, July 25, the Dance Theatre of Harlem will be on stage at Guild Hall for an evening of performance and education in a close setting.

"One of the beauties of doing this event at Guild Hall is that the intimacy of the theater is going to allow me to have a little more room to talk about the art, how it works, and what it's like dancing for Dance Theatre of Harlem," Garland said. "The two events connect both culture and art. I get to serve the community through KidFest, and I get to serve the art form through the Guild Hall event."

Company dancer Alexandra Hutchinson is one of the dancers participating in the Guild Hall residency. Hutchinson has been a dancer with DTH since 2017, and is currently in her eighth season performing with the company. She orig-

inated roles in two of Garland's pieces, "Higher Ground" and "Breathe."

Hutchinson's mother was a dancer, so she believes that a passion for ballet is in her blood.

"My father filled our home with the sounds of classical, jazz, R&B, blues, rock and soul music," Hutchinson said. "In my home, dance took music to another level. I came into the world to the sounds of Stravinsky's 'Firebird' — next year, I will be honored to perform this role for DTH."

Being a part of Dance Theatre of Harlem, Hutchinson said, is a dream realized.

"For more than 50 years, DTH has prepared many Black and Brown children and adults to approach their daily lives with confidence and grace as well as an appreciation for Harlem's unique contributions to America's ballet story," she said.

"The representation of our brown bodies in concert halls, theaters and stages across the country and around the world is powerful and transformative," she continued. "I feel honored to be a part of this legacy, helping to inspire future generations in ballet and beyond."

Born in Delaware and raised in Washington, D.C., Hutchinson expressed excitement about coming to the East End for the first time.

"I am overjoyed and honored to perform in the Hamptons," Hutchinson said. "This area has a long and rich history as a haven for culture, artists and collectors ... I'm excited to share DTH's repertory with this community, and I'm eager to see how our performances will resonate with audiences."

Dance Theatre of Harlem's performance on Friday, July 25, will take place at 8 p.m. For more information, visit guild-hall.org.

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