

Thursday  
**SEP 28**  
7:30 pm



*Expect rock-concert sound levels at this performance. To accommodate individual listening needs, ear plugs are available at the Audience Services Desk in the lobby before and during the show.*

# HIPILET

## BALLERINAS

**A trailblazing fusion of hip-hop and ballet**



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## WHAT IS HIPLET?

Hippet (pronounced “hip-lay”) is an innovative dance form that fuses classical pointe technique with African, Latin, hip-hop and urban dance styles that are rooted in communities of color. The only company in the world to perform this signature trademark style, Hippet Ballerinas is the professional company of the Chicago Multicultural Dance Center (CMDC). Promoting inclusivity in both their cast and audiences, Hippet (pronounced “hip-lay”) features true-toned tights, modern music and dancers of all shapes, sizes and colors.

Performances may incorporate the rhythms of African drums with Tchaikovsky, arabesques and beatboxing or even Tango en pointe—all while showcasing Hippet’s trademark sass, hip movements and struts against popular music audiences will recognize, from Black Violin to Beyoncé. Fueled by inclusivity and modern movement, the Hippet technique was created by decorated dancer and instructor Homer Hans Bryant.

Bryant taught at his studio, CMDC, where he envisioned his training to be accessible to everyone. After features on *Good Morning America*, BuzzFeed and *The Huffington Post*, the new art form went viral in spring 2016 and now has amassed over a billion views. Since then, partnerships with Mercedes Benz, *Vogue’s* Anna Wintour, New York and Paris Fashion Week, *W Magazine*, Versace and Old Navy, to name a few, have culminated in an incredible worldwide demand for a live show featuring Bryant’s innovative technique. For more information, visit [www.hippetballerinas.com](http://www.hippetballerinas.com).

## PROGRAM

### **Act I: *The Journey, The Evolution***

As an African American man in ballet, Homer Hans Bryant, has always been ahead of his time. See this artistic depiction of The Dream, The Struggle and The Evolution of Hippet.

1. **Film: *My Journey from Ballet to Hippet* by Homer Hans Bryant**

2. ***It’s Hippet***

Choreography by Homer Hans Bryant

Music by Fernando Jones and Homer Hans Bryant, with the voice of Homer Hans Bryant

3. ***Don’t Give Up***

Choreography by Daijah

Music by Lamyaa Hanchaoui

4. ***Praise Him Anyhow***

Choreography by Idella Davis

Music by Tye Tribbet, sound mixed by Brian Ford

Psalm 34:1–3

I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together.

Through the journey of dance, we must praise Him Anyhow!

5. **Film: Interview with Homer Hans Bryant**

6. **From Ballet to Hiplet**

Choreography by Homer Hans Bryant, Kris Bellvié, Trevon Lawrence and Imani Sailers  
Music by Black Violin and Nuttin' But Stringz

*From Ballet to Hiplet* is a play on ballet hip-hop fusion showcasing how two opposites can come together. Ballerinas and hip-hop dancers trade moves to classical violin music set to a hip-hop beat. Featuring Homer Hans Bryant's signature piece "Jammin'," *From Ballet to Hiplet* is a crowd favorite.

7. **Film: Hiplet Ballerinas in St. Croix: A Documentary (excerpt)**

8. **Rhythm: The Soul of Life**

Choreography by Homer Hans Bryant, William Gill, Cameryn Stevens and others  
Music by Phil Cochran and Legacy, A-Star, and DJ Micks

*Rhythm: The Soul of Life* premiered in 1994 with the original Bryant Ballet Company. The roots of Hiplet began with the Bryant Ballet company in the 1990s. *Rhythm: The Soul of Life* is a journey through the diaspora of African American dance, showcasing a variety of African and Afro-Caribbean dance techniques intertwined with classical ballet and pointe.

## 20-Minute Intermission

### Act II: The Arrival, The Revolution

1. **Missing You**

Choreography by Nina Rose Wardanian  
Music by Roberta Flack, Aretha Franklin and Angie Stone

*Missing You* is a departure from typical Hiplet, featuring contemporary choreography with a more mature approach. Chronicling the ebbs and flows of women as they navigate personal relationships, *Missing You* is an emotional journey of love, loss and sisterhood.

2. **Film: Because Of Them We Can**

A short film by Nia Cooper set to the Maya Angelou poem "Phenomenal Women"

*Because Of Them We Can* is a tribute to African American women dancers who came before Hiplet and performed through obstacles, paving the way for today's dancers to express themselves freely.

3. **Motown Revue**

Choreographer by Tanji Harper  
Music: a medley of Motown classics

Let's take a trip down memory lane as we explore the iconic sounds of Motown. From The Temptations to Diana Ross, we have it all. Not only is this piece about the music, it's about capturing the essence of the time. This is a fun piece that will leave you with a smile and make you want to do the hustle and a little two-step.

#### 4. **React**

Choreography by Trevon Lawrence and Anthony Sampson  
Music by the Pussycat Dolls

Premiering in 2021, this is the extended version of the Hippet Ballerinas *America's Got Talent* season 16 audition.

#### 5. **In Chicago**

Structured freestyle by Jordan "J. Ro" Ordonez  
Music by Kid Enigma, "Chicago - Original"

#### 6. **Chicago Suite**

Choreography by Homer Hans Bryant, Blair Cartlidge, Anthony Sampson, Brandy Ford and Jayda Perry  
Music by Future Force, Chance the Rapper, Ric Wilson and others

Hippet honors its geographical roots by featuring dances to music by local Chicago artists. Chicago's music scene is earthy and diverse—from blues to jazz, rap to house and everything in between.

#### 7. **Pasos (Steps)**

Choreography by Rebecca Alaman  
Music by The Spanish Harlem Orchestra, "Mama Guela"

Ballet combined with steps and movement in Latin, jazz, hip-hop, salsa and caleña in a fiery choreography.

Program is subject to change.

## MEET THE COMPANY



### **Homer Hans Bryant**, artistic director & founder

Homer Hans Bryant, the creator of Hippet™, is a former principal dancer with the Dance Theatre of Harlem and a former member of Prima Ballerina Maria Tallchief's Chicago City Ballet. His professional credits include the Broadway production of *Timbuktu* with the Legendary Eartha Kitt and the motion picture *The Wiz* with Diana Ross and Michael Jackson. In 1990, he opened his own studio, Bryant Ballet, with a focus to offer all dancers, but

especially low-income students and dancers of color, an entry into classical ballet. By 1997, the mayor of Chicago renamed his school the Chicago Multicultural Dance Center (CMD) in honor of the studio's work in the community. Other teaching and training experiences include working with the original casts of Cirque Du Soleil's *Mystere*, *Alegria*, *Quidam* and *Saltimbanco*. Homer Bryant was also a guest instructor at the Dance Open Ballet Festival in Russia, where he taught his unique body alignment/floor barre technique at the Bolshoi Ballet Academy, the Kirov Ballet Academy and the Boris Eifman School. Over the years, Homer has continued to incorporate hip-hop and ballet, eventually coining the term Hippet™ in 2009.

CMDC has trained many dancers who now perform with Cirque Du Soleil, Alvin Ailey, Broadway productions and more. CMDC is the only contemporary ballet school in the world that teaches Hiplet™.

“The fun is in the discipline, the discipline is in the fun.” — Homer Hans Bryant



**Robin Edwards**, executive director

Robin Edwards began her stint in the arts during her childhood as a student at Jack and Jill Acting School, Mayfair Academy and The American Conservatory of Music under Grace Tichy. After being featured in television commercials and multiple productions, specifically *Oliver Twist*, in which she portrayed Oliver, she found her niche in performance, continuing to participate in school productions and music concerts. She also began to show abilities in songwriting. Her study of music continued at the Dorolyn Academy with music later being the door to several opportunities, including traveling to destinations such as Riga, Latvia and Puerto Rico, leading workshops based on songs she had composed. Robin has worked in the Chicago public and parochial school systems, developing after school music and performance programs for students. Later, Robin returned to the dance studio as a tap-dance instructor and performing arts director at the Sammy Dyer School of the Theatre. At Sammy Dyer, Robin wrote and presented four productions on the main stage, all comprised of student performers. Currently, Robin sits on the board of directors at the Sammy Dyer School of the Theatre, CMDC and Shoot For The Stars non-profit organizations, and she is the executive director for CMDC and the Hiplet Ballerinas. In this capacity, Robin is able to bring together her arts, performance and leadership skills to ensure a lasting legacy for each organization. With over 20 years of experience in working with non-profit organizations, Robin is able to effectively serve the multiple needs of the CMDC and the Hiplet Ballerinas from a business and artistic standpoint, while working diligently to service the needs of the communities they serve.



**Taylor Edwards**, associate artistic director

Chicago native Taylor Edwards is a graduate of the University of Missouri Kansas City with a BFA in dance. She received her early training in dance from the Sammy Dyer School of the Theatre, CMDC and the Chicago High School for the Arts, and she has also trained with Deeply Rooted Dance Theater. She is fluent in many styles of dance including ballet, modern, jazz, hip-hop, tap, contemporary, jazz funk, and improvisation, and she has worked and performed with companies such as Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, Owen Cox Dance Group and Wylliams Henry Dance Company. Taylor has choreographed and danced for many different artists, including Chicago's very own Kanye West, Tink and Chance the Rapper.

**Gwenne Godwin**, production stage management/tour management, lighting & projection design

Gwenne is passionate about many things and she is fortunate to work in fields that she loves. She is a lighting designer, production stage manager, master electrician, tax preparer and urban farmer. She has worked with numerous dance companies over the years and is always amazed at the dedication, passion, athleticism and beauty they exhibit in their performances. She considers it an honor to share her artistry with such talented individuals. "Life is short, dance like no one is watching. Grow your own veg and share it."



### **Allison Harsh**

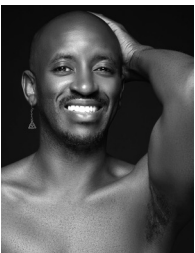
Allison (Allie) Harsh was born and raised in Omaha, NE, where she began her dance training. She earned her BFA in dance performance from the Conservatory of Music and Dance at the University of Missouri Kansas City. Allie's dance training also includes the Kansas City Ballet and Deeply Rooted Dance Theater. She performed with the Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey for three years before joining Hippet Ballerinas in 2019 and also

dances as a member of Redd's Angelz. Enjoy the show!



### **Ben Marshall**

Ben Marshall began his training at the Chicago High School for the Arts. Later, he started and led a small dance group made up of him and his peers, performing original works for John Schmitz's Dance Chicago showcase series, as well as producing his own shows. After graduating from ChiArts, he attended the University of Michigan. In 2018, he graduated from U of M, and joined the Hippet Ballerinas in August 2022.



### **Brandon Avery**

Brandon Avery, native of South Holland, IL, taught himself urban dance techniques and later joined Clear Vision Dance Team in 2006. His formal dance training began at Knox College, and continued with CMDC, Gus Giordano Dance School and Ballethnic Academy of Dance. Brandon has performed with and/or for Mielle Organics, Ballethnic Dance Company, Anthony Burrell's Project AB, Red Clay Dance, Joel Hall Dancers and MTV2.

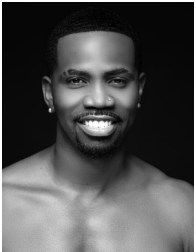
He has choreographed for Donovan "Korporate" Price, Drew Sidora and Praize Productions, Inc. Currently, he is the choreographer for Aya Ito, an instructor for Praize Productions, Inc., a dancer for Mikey Everything and The Haus of Everything, a member of the Pioneering HOUSE of Alain Mikli, and the founder/instructor of Hips & Heels by Brandon Avery™. This is Brandon's second season performing and touring with the Hippet Ballerinas.

**Dajiah Alexander**

Dajiah, also known as Dai, was born July 4, 2000, and is an American dancer. She has worked with various companies and productions, such as W.O.D, KNVS, NEB and 1501. She is hardworking, motivated and dedicated to her craft and is always looking to improve.

**Jordan "J. Ro" Ordonez**

Jordan "J. Ro" Ordonez is a Chicago-based dance artist and athlete, tenor II, actor, teaching artist, arts administrator and an aspiring community leader represented by The Rock Talent Agency. He is a public health pharmacist turned artist with a black belt in Shotokan Karate, who started his artist journey with the Hip Hop ConnXion and is a member of Jus.Be House Collective (2018–present), BraveSoul Movement Company (2018) and Movement Revolution Dance Crew. J. Ro is also a past co-captain of the Chicago Bulls 312 Crew (2018–2023) and a previous guest artist with Chicago Dance Crash. Other credits include *Pippen* (Music Theater Works), *The Big Leap* (FOX) and the 2023 NBA Allstar Weekend (ESPN). J. Ro is a grateful guest and forever student in the house dance and hip-hop movements and identifies as an optimist and a young leader with passions for dancing, learning and impacting his community. While not dancing or performing, you'll find J. Ro at the movies, scrolling on TikTok or spending time with his family dogs, Spencer and Crimson.

**Kris Bellvié**

Born April 23, 1986, the American actor, dancer and choreographer is one of the newest members of the Hiplet Ballerinas. He made his debut in an all-Black ensemble in *The Factotum* by The Lyric Opera of Chicago. He appeared in the 2022 feature film *North of the 10*, and he has made recurring appearances in the *Power Book IV: Force* television program (season 1 and 2) and as a recurring dancer in season 6 of *Empire*. He has toured and worked with many artists, including Kanye West, Shawna, Sir The Baptist, Nathan Palmer and D. Lylez. Other credits include performances with Kelly Clarkson, Chris Brown, Twista, Social Club Misfits, Mario, Da Brat and Black Eyed Peas. In all of his hard work, Kris has been able to uplift and provide outlets for the youth in the form of dance programs, tutoring and mentoring. This is his third season touring with the Hiplet Ballerinas.





### **Makyla Bates**

Makyla Bates is a Southside Chicago native, who began dancing at the Mayfair Dance Academy at age three. She began training at CMDC under the direction of Homer Bryant at age 11. This is where she discovered the true meaning of classical techniques. She graduated from Chicago High School for the Arts (ChiArts) and studied in New York at the Dance Theatre of Harlem and Alvin Ailey Summer Intensive programs. She also trained with the

Deeply Rooted Summer Intensive and Emerging Choreographers. She successfully completed Alonzo King LINES Ballet professional training program in 2020. Currently trained in ballet/pointe, hip-hop, contemporary, African, modern and jazz, Makyla is an original Hippet Ballerina. She was part of the viral sensation and had the opportunity to perform on *Good Morning America*, *TedTalk* and in the U.S. Virgin Islands, St. Thomas, and she was recently featured on the *Kelly and Ryan* show.



### **Nia Towe**

Nia Towe is a Chicago-based dancer from Oak Park, IL. She received a bachelor's in dance from the University of Missouri Kansas City. While in school, she worked with Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey and danced at Debbie Allen's Key to the City ceremony. After graduating, she performed with Eleoné Dance Theatre, on America's Got Talent, in Moncler's Paris fashion week and at the 51st World Dance Conference on Dance Research in

Athens, Greece. This is Nia's second season touring with the Hippet Ballerinas.



### **Terri K. Woodall**

Southside Chicago native Terri K. Woodall is a purposeful multifaceted artist and a "dancerpreneur" who has been training in dance since age four. Her technical background ranges from ballet, modern and jazz to tap, hip-hop and musical theatre, and she's had the honor and privilege to train/work with acclaimed artists, like Dr. Elena D. Anderson, Dave Scott, Donyelle Jones, Florence Walker-Harris, Jon Engstrom, Lee Howard and Michelle

Elkin, to name a few. Chicago theatre credits include Studio One Dance Theater's productions of *If The Shoe Fits* (Harris Kid), *Once Upon A Time In Oz* (Zora), *#BlackGirlStories* (Freddy/Harriet Tubman), *Malcolm and Jordan's Amazingly Fantastical Black History Project* (Jordan/Harriet Tubman) and Porchlight Music Theater's award-winning production of Duke Ellington's *Sophisticated Ladies*. Regional Theater credits include 5 Star Theatrical's *Children of Eden* (ensemble), *Sister Act: The Musical* (Michelle/ensemble), *Joseph and The Amazing Technicolored Dreamcoat* (ensemble) and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (ensemble/dance captain). She is a graduate of The American Musical and Dramatic Academy with BFA in dance theater, and she is currently a company member with Rize Pro-Elite (Praize Productions, Inc.) and performing apprentice with Hippet Ballerinas.