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Jesse Bechard, a main company dancer, grew up in Bolton and trained at the Boston Ballet after graduating from the arts-oriented Walnut Hill School in Natick.

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By Keith Powers
For The Patriot Ledger
Posted Apr. 9, 2016 @ 8:00 am



When the Chicago-based Hubbard Street Dance troupe returns to Boston next weekend, the performances will be a homecoming for dancer Jesse Bechard, who grew up in Bolton.

Bechard and the other fabulous dancers of the modern dance troupe will perform three shows as part of the Celebrity Series

of Boston at the Citi Shubert Theater from April 15-17.

Hubbard Street Dance has long been a local favorite for its high-energy, jazz-based works. Next weekend's performances mark the troupe's fifth appearance since its Boston debut in 1985. On tap are performances of works by legendary choreographers William Forsythe and Crystal Pite and up-and-comer Penny Saunders.

Bechard, a main company dancer, trained at the Boston Ballet after graduating from the arts-oriented Walnut Hill School in Natick.

"I saw Baryshnikov doing 'Nutcracker' and I immediately said, 'I want to do that,'" Bechard said. "I took my first lessons in a strip mall, next to a karate studio, on and off starting when I was 6 years old. The way I understood ballet and modern dance at the time, it was either white tutus or bare feet and loin cloths."

Bechard said magazines such as the trade publication Dance Magazine, was his

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only exposure to contemporary dance.

“The Internet and YouTube weren’t really prolific then. Eventually, I auditioned for a bunch of dance schools, and I applied to the University of Chicago. I went there for a year, and then I really decided to dance.”

A stint in Virginia at the famed Richmond Ballet followed.

“I was really trying to climb the dance ladder,” he said.

However, a chance to see Nederlands Dans Theater 2, one of the premier contemporary troupes in the world, changed everything.

“I had seen choreographers like Jiri Kylian before, but to see him in person – it was a new vocabulary. After that point, I didn’t look back,” Bechard said. “And now, I feel like there’s no limits here. When people ask me what we do, I say anything from classical ballet to break dance – even though I don’t know a thing about break dancing. Anything is possible.”

One of the works Bechard will dance in Boston is “A Picture of You Falling,” a piece that’s extracted from a larger work by Canadian choreographer Crystal Pite.





“It’s about this guy being tossed about by forces he doesn’t understand,” Bechard said. “Very satisfying, very visceral. It’s enjoyable because you can interpret it different ways. That’s really what makes a work interesting. If you have a piece you know, and you treat it like comfortable shoes, the audience can read that. This piece gives you leeway.”

Cutting-edge choreographer William Forsythe – Hubbard Street will dance his “N.N.N.N.” – is a known commodity in the modern dance world, as is Pite, whose own troupe, Kidd Pivot, is a sensation.





“Go anywhere, anytime, for the chance to see them,” Bechard said.

Hubbard Street dancer Penny Saunders also choreographed a piece that the troupe will perform for Boston audiences.

“Penny has been with the company a long time,” said artistic director Glenn Edgerton, “and this is her first work for the main company. It really shows off our troupe. It involves a big cast, and fills the stage beautifully. As always, we promote emerging choreographers any chance we get. When we find talent in our own company, that’s even better.”

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“This program is a snapshot of where we are at this given moment,” Edgerton said.

“When we come to Boston, we don’t have to dumb anything down. Some of our favorite choreographers – like Jiri Kylian and Jorma Elo – have work presented in Boston all the time.”

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Hubbard Street Dance Chicago

WHEN: April 15-17

WHERE: Shubert Theatre, 265 Tremont St., Boston

TICKETS: \$35-\$75

INFO: 888-348-9738; [celebrity](#)



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