



HUBBARD STREET
DANCE CHICAGO

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023

IN SEASON 45:

Parkinson's Project participants experienced **22 classes** throughout the year and Hubbard Street hosted **5 Movement for Wellness workshops** throughout the summer

Hubbard Street celebrated its **45th Anniversary** as a leading contemporary dance company

Over **4,500 students** attended our Community Matinees in person and virtually

Featured in The New York Times as "**number 1 thing to do**" this weekend.

Announced **Aszure Barton** as Resident Artist for the next 3 Years

Alexandria Best won a 2023 Princess Grace Award, bringing the total Princess Grace Awards received by Hubbard Street Dancers to **11 in the four decades** the prize has been awarded

Abdiel Figueroa Reyes was named a **Forbes Chicago 30 Under 30**

HSDC appeared on **2 live TV performances** (in the same morning!) on FOX 32 and WGN-Chicago

The Company was featured in *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune* and *Dance Magazine* and Artistic Director Linda-Denise Fisher-Harrell made an appearance in *Crain's* as a "Chicagoan to Know"



WELCOME

45 years ago, four young dancers, Claire, Karen, Terry, and Ann debuted Lou Conte's choreography on the worn planks of community centers across Chicago. For those who witnessed these early performances, it was clear that there was something universal at the core of their work. The choreography was authentic, athletic, joyful, and heart-wrenchingly beautiful. Their movements reflected the essence of our city while striving to awaken the human spirit through the universal language of dance.

In the 45 years since, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago has become one of the world's most renowned contemporary dance companies, pushing the boundaries of our art with unmatched technical ability and artistry. Our dancers have inspired hundreds of thousands of people across the world while our teaching artists have moved countless Chicagoans through our world-class training, education and community programs.

In recent years, Hubbard Street's struggles have mirrored those of our larger society. Hubbard Street has been forced to reconsider almost everything, leading us to embark on the creation of this strategic plan. The process has been extensive and inclusive: We engaged a diversity of internal and external voices, conducted surveys and interviews, and gathered data to inform our plan. We have been inspired by these conversations and have never felt the love and thoughtfulness of our community more fully.

The result is a new mission statement and strategic plan that looks both to our past and to our community as guiding lights for our future. Hubbard Street hearkens back to those early days, redoubling our commitment to **awakening the human spirit through contemporary dance** while setting our sights on helping foster the emergence of a **dance ecosystem that is accessible and relevant to all**. In this work, we will be guided by our commitment to presenting diverse voices and taking the risks necessary to open new pathways on our journey toward greatness, deeper community, and an environment of learning and possibility.

As we move toward our 50th anniversary, implementing the recommendations of this plan and working to make Hubbard Street more **Sustainable, Distinctive, Accessible, and Proactive**, we are buoyed by the spirit of Lou and those first dancers; by the generosity of 45 years of board members, supporters, and audiences; by the tenacity of every dancer, choreographer, teaching artist, and employee that has ever worked at Hubbard Street; and—perhaps most importantly—we are buoyed by the future, a future in which anyone that seeks it can be awakened by the spirit of Hubbard Street.



OUR MISSION

Awaken the human spirit through contemporary dance

The mission is entirely unique to Hubbard Street and expresses the core purpose and impact that the organization seeks to achieve.

OUR VISION

A dance landscape that is relevant and accessible to all

The vision statement is a large, long-term aspiration that Hubbard Street pursues and advocates for others to pursue with them. It is a radical and transformative goal that the organization would not be able to attain by itself.

OUR METHOD

We nurture diverse voices in contemporary dance, opening new pathways to growth, learning, and discovery in Chicago and throughout the world

The statement of method defines our unique process and the activities that help us reach towards the primary purpose and impact of the mission and vision.

OUR VALUES

Artistry

We strive for greatness, always seeking growth and improvement, cultivating and celebrating the artistry found in ourselves and all parts of our work.

Belonging

We ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion for every body, fostering well-being in people, teams, and communities.

Curiosity

We ask questions, take risks, and focus on the possible. We strive to understand our impacts personally and institutionally.

The values are not our core purpose nor a broader vision, but they describe fundamental principles in how Hubbard Street undertakes its role and work. Values help identify the best partners, employees, artists, policies, and culture.

OUR PROCESS

Over the last 12 months, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (HSDC) has engaged in intensive conversation about our core purpose and strategic direction. During this process, we committed to an honest and transparent assessment of our strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in an effort to more fully embrace our mission and purpose while building a stronger, smarter, and healthier organization.

As a part of this process, HSDC endeavored to collect input from a diversity of internal and external voices and sources including the following:

- Seeking input from each of Hubbard Street's 14 dancers, 14 administrators, and its 15 part-time teaching artists and crew;
- Establishing a 12-member Strategic Planning Committee made up of staff and board members that met and collaborated throughout the process;
- Organizing an eight-member Community Advisory Committee to provide an external lens in reviewing the assessments and plans;
- Facilitating an organizational planning summit with board, staff, and other internal participants;
- Conducting a 40-question community survey for audiences and donors, which received 183 responses on a wide variety of topics;
- Assembling dozens of individual and group interviews that reached at least 66 people, including Board members, dancers, teaching artists, staff, and the local dance community; and
- Collecting and compiling dozens of internal background documents and data such as Budgets, Board & Staff Demographics, EDI Organizational Assessment, and Anti-Racism Action Plan.

OUR DOCUMENT

The premiere of a new work for the stage is the result of a complex, iterative, and on-going creative process. This document is no different. This document codifies steps we must take to achieve our vision, more fully embody our values, and more effectively and more inclusively grow participation in all of our activities, but we also recognize that a single document can not reflect the full breadth of the organization's work nor the full extent of our desires for the future.

As we move towards our 50th anniversary, the strategic goals and objectives outlined will serve as a framework for thinking about four critical areas of our work, how our work will interact with our communities, and the tactical projects that will be implemented as a part of this process. The success of Hubbard Street on its 50th anniversary will be deeply intertwined with our commitment to our art and the on-going and continuous improvement necessary to sustain any successful creative endeavor.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

Contemporary dance evolved through an on-going process of challenging orthodoxies in search of new movements and points of connection within ourselves and our communities. Hubbard Street, as a significant voice in the dance community, remains committed to this legacy and to the process of continuous reflection and improvement.

The goals listed in this plan are significant steps we must take along our evolutionary path, but they are not intended to reflect the full breadth of the organization's work or our desires for the future. The goals and objectives listed here are a framework for thinking about the four most critical areas of our work, how we interact with our communities, and the tactical projects that will arise from our commitment to continuous improvement.

SUSTAINABLE

Provide a more supportive work environment for dancers, teaching artists, and staff by strengthening long term financial viability, growing revenue centers, and controlling costs.

DISTINCTIVE

Expand HSDC's reach and increase resonance by clarifying and promoting our story, brand, and overall messaging framework.

ACCESSIBLE

Advance HSDC's efforts to make world class contemporary dance accessible to all.

PROACTIVE

Continually investigate, develop, and pilot initiatives that increase artistic excellence and impact, while deepening visibility, sustainability, accessibility, and community engagement.

Hubbard Street Dancers David Schultz, Aaron Choate, Matt Wenckowski, and Elliot Hammans in *As the Wind Blows* by Amy Hall Garner. Photo by Danica Paulos, courtesy of Jacob's Pillow.



GOAL 1: SUSTAINABLE

Provide a more supportive work environment for dancers, teaching artists, and staff by strengthening long term financial viability, growing revenue centers, and controlling costs.

Objectives

Grow Revenue

Maintain a Healthy and Balanced Workplace

Increase Financial Flexibility

In this time of massive economic and cultural realignment, achieving a balance between revenue growth, spending, and sustainable support systems for our staff, dancers and teaching artists is essential for Hubbard Street's long-term viability. Seemingly at odds, these goals cannot be achieved independently.

As we move forward, we must continue to set aggressive revenue goals, but also must do more to create concrete achievable plans, allowing us to succeed without burning out staff. We must continue to invest our precious resources in the art and programs that are the core of Hubbard Street, but must also look to leverage underutilized resources in order to make new investments geared toward growing the organization. We cannot achieve these goals without sustainable employee support, investing in our workforce and fostering a culture that values and rewards their contributions.

By prioritizing financial growth, clear planning, and sustainable employee support, Hubbard Street can create a solid foundation for long-term growth and success, ensuring that both the organization and its employees thrive over time.

Grow Revenue

- Design and implement a plan to significantly increase contributed revenues through growth of board, major supporters, and overall donor base
- Grow earned revenues by adopting new strategies to increase demand for and capacity of intensives and performances
- Consider new sources of revenue, as HSDC creates new pathways for dancers, choreographers, and audiences

Maintain a Healthy and Balanced Workplace

- Pursue policies and practices that support dancers, teaching artists, and staff with fair pay, robust employment benefits, and opportunities for professional growth
- Build processes and systems that better monitor and forecast resource allocation needs
- Raise and allocate funding resources specifically for new initiatives

Increase Financial Transparency and Health

- Ensure proper stewardship of funds through deeper analysis and more transparent sharing
- Create greater flexibility within cash reserves and board-restricted endowments

WHAT WE LEARNED:

Quotes and key findings from our stakeholders

“Hubbard Street has the opportunity to lead within the dance industry from a lens of health, sustainability and eco-friendly planning.”

“Hubbard Street should uplift the voices of frontline staff. Provide context to their perspectives, highlight their visions, and include the value of their staff development into long-term plans.”

“Focus on a few critical things that can lead the organization back to profitability.”

“I feel like the vision and the talent are there. Hubbard Street just needs people on the outside to start believing it.”

“Now is the time to explore what is possible. And what is sustainable.”



GOAL 2: DISTINCTIVE

Expand HSDC's reach and increase resonance by clarifying and promoting our story, brand, and overall messaging framework.

Objectives

Define the Brand

Broaden Awareness

Increase Prominence

Today, there is more competition than ever for cultural experiences, the growth of destination dining, interactive museums, touring Broadway, and music festivals to name just a few. Due to this growth, Chicago has become an increasingly complex market for traditional performing arts offerings. To succeed in this environment, we must recapture the hearts and minds of all Chicagoans.

While Hubbard Street's reputation for excellence and boundary-pushing is legendary within the international dance community, our reputation within Chicago is more complicated. Once widely recognized as Chicago's largest and most important dance company Hubbard Street has, in recent years, lost its grip on the collective imaginations of both everyday Chicagoans and those within Chicago's arts, culture, and philanthropic communities. Thankfully, under new artistic leadership, a reimagined Hubbard Street has emerged, committed to upholding the artistic excellence of the past while creating more accessible art.

Hubbard Street has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to capitalize on this moment and we must move quickly to redefine our brand, broaden awareness, and increase our prominence within Chicago.

Define the Brand

- Work with a partner to craft a distinctive and accessible brand platform

Broaden Awareness

- Undertake an institutional awareness campaign
- Expand HSDC ambassador programs
- Develop a PR strategy that increases reach outside of the performing arts world

Increase Prominence

- Explore partnership with prestigious arts institutions in Chicago and throughout the country.
- Increase visibility in civic spaces through participation in panel discussion, speeches, and gala performances



WHAT WE LEARNED:

Quotes and key findings from our stakeholders

“Representation has been really encouraging. When I think of Hubbard Street, I think of history, and I wonder about the present and future. Hubbard Street has a reputation and an illustrious history, but I also wonder if it’s an opportunity to engage new generations and encourage them to understand that history.”

“HSDC has the potential to expose the best of Chicago and its collaborative culture to the world! Get out there, tour, and put Chicago on the map!”

“Hubbard Street Dance inspires and creates community through dance whether for an audience who is lifted up through the artistic product on stage; the student who discovers that movement opens them to new thinking and views of the world; and the trainee/dancer who grows from our classes and training.”

“It’s really time now to grow name recognition and brand presence in Chicago.”

“Let’s find ways for Hubbard Street to foster new, creative ways of bringing dance into society.”

“Hubbard Street shines most when there is a clear & communicated vision, both internally and externally.”

“Alignment on key priorities, and be able to express them together such that everything else can be relegated to background noise.”

From top: Hubbard Street Dancer Cyrie Topete in *Dear Frankie* by Rennie Harris. Photo by Michelle Reid. Hubbard Street Dance Chicago in *As the Wind Blows* by Amy Hall Garner. Photo by Danica Paulos, courtesy of Jacob’s Pillow.

GOAL 3: ACCESSIBLE

Advance efforts that make world-class contemporary dance accessible to all.

Objectives

Make Room for More Voices

Minimize Barriers

Maximize On-ramps

Over the past 5 years, much of the world has awakened to the powerful realities of structural racism and a broader lack of equity and access for historically marginalized populations across society. While the dance community has long been a place of refuge to many marginalized groups and individuals, it has also quietly limited access and created barriers to entry. Unfortunately, while Hubbard Street has always strived to be an inclusive institution, it has not yet fully established itself as an exception to this dichotomy.

Now, for the first time in Hubbard Street's history, accessibility, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism are not only a part of our core mission, they are in many ways leading our work. Now more than ever, we are placing diverse voices on the stage, at the front of the studio, and in the classroom. However, more can be done to provide equitable access to our training programs and mainstage performances. Hubbard Street must also ensure that internal structures are always implemented, evaluated, and improved with an inclusive and anti-racist lens.

To truly succeed in this work, Hubbard Street must truly reflect and welcome its community through its art, programs, and future facilities making contemporary dance accessible to all.

Make Room for More Voices

- Engage and promote a diversity of voices in Hubbard Street's public programming
- Examine and modify Hubbard Street's internal structures and processes to become a more anti-racist organization

Minimize Barriers

- Reduce financial barriers to participation in main-company performance and training programs through ticket access initiatives and scholarships

Maximize On-ramps

- Partner with the community to seek new relationships outside the dance and arts world
- Investigate community-based programming such as pop-ups
- Build clearer internal pathways that more seamlessly flow between community, education, training programs and the main company
- Continually assess our programs in the Chicago Public Schools, ensuring programmatic interventions are high impact
- Look to re-establish training programs and a facility that can serve as both a beacon and an on-ramp to dance

WHAT WE LEARNED:

Quotes and key findings from our stakeholders

"Diversify everything—from talent, to content, to choreography, to audiences, and to revenue sources!"

"I'd like to see a priority around increasing awareness of dance and the arts among groups historically excluded from access to the arts"

"Early on Hubbard Street Dance was accessible, and they had a platform. They could bring in other work that was more challenging, that stretched audiences' capacity for taking in new ideas. That kind of energy has been a consistent piece of HSDC identity and continues even today."

"Although the work may be more accessible just by being what it is, we are also doing more to explain and give more inclusivity and accessibility in what we are offering than we were four or five years ago. It was happening back then but in a different way."

"The company has been making intentional dramatic changes. It has been successful in steering the ship in a good direction. The work now is accessible from various entry points, and less oblique to someone who might not have knowledge of contemporary dance."

"It feels more accessible because there is such variety between and within the productions."

"I cannot say this is a fact, but it feels as if HSDC cares about the community, cares about inclusion, and truly cares about breaking down barriers in the dance world. Some other organizations give me the feeling that the community engagement is more for show, or to please funders."

Almost 80% of respondents [to the Community Stakeholder Survey] noted HSDC's efforts around diversity in board, staff, dancers and choreographers.

78% of participants [in the Community Stakeholder Survey] also responded positively to efforts for a greater variety of artistic programming that is more accessible to a broader audience.

From top: Summer Intensive dancers taking class. Photos by Todd Rosenberg. Students at Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy during an HSDC MAP Residency. Photo courtesy of HSDC Education.



GOAL 4: PROACTIVE

Continually investigate, develop, and pilot initiatives that increase artistic excellence and impact, while deepening visibility, sustainability, accessibility, and community engagement.

Objectives

Begin Plans for a New Home and Training Academy

Explore Signature Initiatives that Drive Impact, Revenue, and Build Identity.

During the pandemic, Hubbard Street sold its long-time home, the Hubbard Street Dance Center on Jackson Boulevard and closed the Lou Conte Dance Studio, which was an important cog in Chicago's dance ecosystem.

Our new home in the Water Tower Place mall has been a unique and much valued gift for our organization, but our souls long for a new facility -- a home that can showcase Hubbard Street's work on stage and a home that can, once again, support a robust slate of training programs while driving impact, revenues, and our identity as a deep community partner.

To succeed, Hubbard Street must continue to explore not only big ideas like a permanent new home and a rebirth of our community education programs, but many others like it. Our organization and our art must continue to dream big dreams and explore new ideas.

Begin Plans for a New Home and Training Academy

- Explore the revenue potential of additional training programs outside the summer intensives
- Undertake an initial feasibility study for the creation of a facility to support the company and academy
- Seek partnerships both in and outside the arts to share upfront and operating costs

Explore signature initiatives that drive impact and revenue, and build identity

- Evaluate opportunities to create communities of support in other cities through residencies, fundraising groups, and board member relationships
- Identify university partnership opportunities
- Explore feasibility and timeline for a long-run production that can be presented annually
- Continuously seek to push the definition of contemporary dance and the programs and performances contemporary dance companies provide

From top: Students taking class with Hubbard Street Dancer Alysia Johnson. Photo courtesy of Marshall University. Hubbard Street Dancers Morgan Clune and Matt Wenckwoski in *Coltrane's Favorite Things* by Lar Lubovitch. Photo by Michelle Reid.



WHAT WE LEARNED:

Quotes and key findings from our stakeholders

"A high quality of artistry paired with openness, willingness to change and adapt, and a refreshing lack of pretentiousness not often found in the dance world."

"Our strength is that we are versatile. We do different things constantly."

"Hubbard Street is expanding the range of work that is being done. The dimension of artistic excellence and balancing the connection with Chicago audiences so HSDC can stay relevant in the dance world and Chicago."

"A strength at Hubbard Street is the diverse community that has developed. It has grown, extended from the artistic leadership. The company has grown in diversifying, even in expanding the number of inclusion efforts. It speaks to what today's dancer looks like."

"One of our strengths is our acknowledgement of trying to inspire the community in educational outreach activities. When we go on tour, we make an effort to do a community matinee, where kids and older community members can be inspired to join us and live through us. First, we are people and then seeing them on stage too. It can feel intimidating, and this can help bring down that barrier."

"I think HSDC offers possibility because of its ability to not be pegged as a particular type/style of company, other than excellent. I think the chameleon-like adaptability is what keeps it interesting for audiences and for its artists."

"Their reputation is strong. They have a lot to do to rebuild audience confidence. To see something extraordinary. But it's better. I saw a Tribune review that expressed the same... a renewed sense of confidence."

"The pre-professional programming that they had helped them bring in half a million dollars. To voluntarily give that up, that was disturbing to witness. All of the students that attended the classes would also buy tickets to the performances. It was like a community of dance students/fans of Hubbard and that's not there anymore."

"Consider re-opening the Lou Conte school for the community or offer ring other dance class opportunities for the community."



HUBBARD STREET DANCE CHICAGO

THANK YOU

to all those involved in the generation of this Strategic Plan:

Jonathan E. Alsberry	Ashley Echevarria	Nikki Horwitz	Abby Olson
John W. Ballantine	Krista Ellensohn	Alysia Johnson	Jodi Patt
Alexandria Best	Sondra Berman Epstein	Ronda Joubert	Byron Pollock
Craig D. Black, Jr.	Abdiel Figueroa Reyes	Erik Kaiko	Alison Richards
Ross B. Bricker	Linda-Denise Fisher-Harrell	Gail Kalver	Melissa Rosenberg
Corinne Brophy	Stanley M. Freehling	Anne Kasdorf	Camille E. Rudge
Jamie Brunson	Charles R. Gardner	Danielle Kfoury	Daisy Rueda
Harrison Pearse Burke	Mara S. Georges	Solange Sandy Lloyd	Julia Rzonca
Jacqueline Burnett	Paul Gignilliat	James Mabie	David Schultz
Meg Callahan	Larry Gilbert	Jen Mallamud	Timothy Schwertfeger
Heather Caruso	Haley Gillespie	David McDermott	Simone Stevens
Aaron Choate	Layzabeth Gonzalez	Marc Miller	Molly Strom
Edythe R. Cloonan	Rebeca G. Griffin	Jasminka Milpak	Cyrie Topete
Morgan Clune	Katie Grogan	Shota Miyoshi	Jack D. Tovin
Steven Collens	Sandra P. Guthman	Belina Mizrahi	Kevin Upham
Kristin Conley	Elliot Hammans	Michelle Modrzejewski	Desiree "Desi" VanDyke
Pam Crutchfield	Eboné Harden	Megan Moran	Matt Wenckowski
Kate Darby	Jack Henderson	Debra Moritz	Randy White
Michele Dooley	Jack Horwitch	Mara Noguez	Yasmine Winkler
Casey Doyle		Marie E. O'Connor	William N. Wood Prince