

HIPLLET

BALLERINAS





Welcome to the MAC! Our entire staff is thrilled to have you here and we are grateful that you have chosen to invest your time in live entertainment and world-class culture in our community. We want to offer you a space to unwind and enjoy an evening filled with laughter, music, dance, or theatre. Our aim is to provide you with unique and inspiring opportunities to engage more deeply with the arts. Join us for a complimentary pre-show MAC Chat or Q&A following specific performances. Our arts center, located in a community college, and offers over 60 student productions supported by professional lighting, sound, and costumes. These can be enjoyed at affordable costs, or you can attend our FREE programs like Music Fridays at Noon and our free international global film series, Global Flicks in February. We hope to exceed your expectations with excellent service and special pre and post-show engagement opportunities. These will help you connect with the artists and art forms more deeply. While you are here, don't forget to visit the Cleve Carney Museum of Art in the lobby to experience cutting-edge contemporary art. You can also enjoy our full-service concession area and gift shop.

After your visit, please stay connected with us by joining us on Facebook (AtTheMAC) or subscribing to our e-newsletter to find out about added shows, events, and special offers (www.AtTheMAC.org). We challenge you to try something new at the MAC and expand your cultural palate. Come see the New Philharmonic Orchestra or a Buffalo Theater Ensemble Play. Or join us this summer for the Lakeside Summer Series. We are grateful for your presence here and we want to ensure that your visit is enjoyable. If you need anything, please don't hesitate to ask any of the staff and we will do our best to accommodate you.

We hope you have a wonderful time and look forward to entertaining you.

Enjoy the show!

Diana Martinez
Director, McAninch Arts Center

McAninch Arts Center
at College of DuPage
presents

HIPILET

BALLERINAS

Homer Hans Bryant
Artistic Director & Founder

Robin Edwards
Executive Director

Taylor Edwards
Associate Artistic Director

Gwenne Godwin
Production Stage Management, Tour Management,
Lighting & Projection Design

The McAninch Arts Center acknowledges support from
the Illinois Arts Council Agency.



Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024, 7:30 p.m.
Belushi Performance Hall

What is Hiplet?

The only company in the world to perform this signature, trademark style, Hiplet Ballerinas of Chicago, Illinois fuses classical pointe technique with African, Latin, Hip-Hop and Urban dance styles rooted in communities of color. Promoting inclusivity in both their cast and audiences, Hiplet (pronounced “hip-lay”) features true-toned tights, modern music and dancers of all shapes, sizes and colors.

PROGRAM

ACT 1: *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 Hiplet.

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

2. *It’s Hiplet*

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 Dajiah

Music by Lamyaa Hanchaoui

4. *Praise Him Anyhow*

Choreography: 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*, the creator of Hiplet

PROGRAM

6. ***From Ballet to Hiplet***

Choreography by Homer Bryant, Kris Bellvié, Trevon Lawrence, and Imani Sailors.

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 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 Bryant, William Gill, Cameryn Stevens, and others

Music by Phil Cochran and Legacy, A-Star, 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.

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"

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: 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.

World Premiere 2021 Extended version of the Hiplet Ballerinas' *America's Got Talent* Season 16 audition.

5. *In Chicago*

Choreography by Robin Edwards

Music by: Jazz4Play featuring Caroline Mhlanga

6. *Chicago Suite*

Choreography by Homer Bryant, Blair Cartlidge, Anthony Sampson, Brandy Ford

Music by Future Force, Ric Wilson, and various Chicago artists

Hiplet 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: Mama Guela by Spanish Harlem Orchestra

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

For more information:
www.hipletballerinas.com

PROFILES



Homer Hans Bryant (Artistic Director & Founder) the creator of Hiplet™, is a former principal dancer with the Dance Theater 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 Multi-Cultural Dance Center" (CMDC) 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*. 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, Bryant has continued to incorporate hip-hop and ballet, eventually coining the term Hiplet™ 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™. Hiplet is now a cultural phenomenon, with millions of views worldwide @hipletballerinas - @homerhbryant, on Instagram, the Hiplet Ballerinas have performed in commercials for Mercedes-Benz (shot in Germany), Desigual, Exotic Jeans (shot in Barcelona, Spain). They have performed in China, traveled to New York, and LA for *Vogue* magazine and to Paris for Fashion Week. Mr. Bryant was the recipient of See Chicago Dance, 2023 "Legacy Award", The Helen & Tim Meier Achievement Award, The Three Arts Legend Award, Chicagoan of the Year in Dance Award, and the Chicago Defender's Men of Excellence Award, just to name a few. Homer Hans Bryant is a native of St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

"The Fun Is In The Discipline, The Discipline Is In The Fun"

---Homer Hans Bryant

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#hiplet



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PROFILES



Robin Edwards (Executive Director) 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,

Edwards found her niche in performance, continuing to participate in school productions and music concerts. She also began, at this time, to show abilities in songwriting. Her study of music continued at the Dorolyn Academy with music later being the door to several opportunities, including travel, which included destinations such as Riga, Latvia, and Puerto Rico, leading workshops based on songs she had composed. Edwards has worked in the Chicago Public School and Parochial school systems, developing after school music and performance programs for students. Later on, Edwards 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, Edwards wrote and presented four productions on the main stage, all comprised of student performers. In conjunction with the arts, Edwards worked as a Call Center Manager for Southwest Airlines, leading teams in production and revenue, later retiring as a flight attendant.

Currently, Edwards sits on the Board of Directors at the Sammy Dyer School of the Theatre, The Chicago Multicultural Dance Center, and Shoot For The Stars non profit organizations, and is the Executive Director for The Chicago Multicultural Dance Center & Hipler Ballerinas. In this capacity, Edwards is able to bring together her arts, performance and leadership skills to ensure a lasting legacy from each organization.

With over 20 years of experience in working with nonprofit organizations, Robin is able to effectively serve the multiple needs of the CMDC & Hipler Ballerinas from a business and artistic standpoint, while working diligently to service the needs of the communities they serve.

PROFILES



Taylor Edwards (Associate Artistic Director), a Chicago native, 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 Theater, Chicago Multicultural Dance Center, and The Chicago High School for the Arts, and 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 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, & Chance The Rapper.

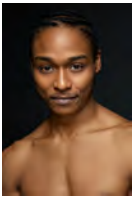
Gwenne Godwin (Production Stage Management/Tour Management, Lighting & Projection Design) is passionate about many things and is fortunate to work in fields that she loves. She is a lighting designer, production stage manager, master electrician, tax preparer and urban farmer. She has worked with numerous dance companies over the years and is always amazed at the dedication, passion, athleticism, and beauty they exhibit in their performances. It's an honor to share my artistry with such talented individuals. Life is short, dance like nobody's watching. Grow your own veg and share it.

A promotional graphic for WDCB 90.9 FM Jazz. The background is a warm, bokeh-lit scene of a brass instrument, likely a trumpet, being played. In the top left corner, there is a circular logo with 'WDCB' at the top, '90.9 FM' in the center, and 'JAZZ' at the bottom. Below the logo, the text 'CHICAGO'S HOME FOR JAZZ AND BLUES' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Underneath that, the text '... and more!' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. In the bottom right corner, the website address 'www.WDCB.org' is written in a green, sans-serif font. On the left side of the graphic, there is a vertical strip of colorful, concentric circles in shades of green, yellow, and red.

CAST PROFILES



Allison Harsh (Allie) was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska 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. Harsh's dance training also includes the Kansas City Ballet, and Deeply Rooted Dance Theatre. She performed with the Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey for three years before joining Hiplet Ballerinas in 2019 and also dances as a member of Redd's Angelz. Enjoy the show!

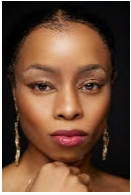


Ben Marshall began training at the Chicago High School for the Arts. Later, he started and led a small dance group made up of him and his peers, performing original works for John Schmitz's Dance Chicago showcase series, as well as producing his own shows. After graduating from ChiArts, he attended the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



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 the Chicago Multicultural Dance School, Gus Giordano Dance School, and Ballethnic Academy of Dance. Avery has performed with/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 Hiplet Ballerinas Company.

CAST PROFILES



Chantal' Ashantè Hill, author of *The Spiritual Ballerina: From Passion to Purpose*, began her formal ballet training at the late age of 18, a path that God purposefully led her to hone and is now known as The Spiritual Ballerina. She trained with Dance Theatre of Harlem, Joel Hall Dancers & Center, and Danspiration Center Inc. She has performed with Joel Hall Dancers, Judah International Dance Theatre, Elements Contemporary Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem- Nutcracker, and currently serves in dance with Yielded Vessel Dance Ministry of New Life Covenant SouthEast. Hill is also the ballet instructor for Ailey Camp Chicago. Hill leads a life of purpose and great faith as she inspires through her dance photography on her website ChantalAshante.com.



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



Kris Bellvié, born April 23rd, 1986, is an American actor, dancer and choreographer, and is one of the newest members of the Hiplet Ballerinas dance company. Debuted in an All Black Ensemble 'The Factotum' by The Lyric Opera of Chicago. He appeared in the 2022 feature film *North of the 10*, and has made recurring appearances in the *Power Book IV: Force* television program Season 1 and 2. Also a recurring dancer in season six of *Empire*. He has toured and worked with many artists including Chicago artists such as Kanye West, Shwnna, 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, Bellvié has been able to uplift and provide outlets for the youth in the form of dance programs, tutoring and mentoring. This is Bellvié's third season touring with the Hiplet Ballerinas Company.

CAST PROFILES



Makyla (Kayla) Bates is a Southside Chicago native and began dancing at Mayfair Dance Academy at the age of three. She began training at Chicago Multicultural Dance Center (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 Theater 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. Bates is an original Hiplet Ballerina. She was part of the viral sensation and had the opportunity to perform on *Good Morning America*, TedTalk and in the US Virgin Islands St. Thomas. She was recently featured on *The Kelly and Ryan Show* and looks forward to the many dance opportunities to come.



Nia Towe is a Chicago based dancer from Oak Park. She received a bachelors 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, Moncler's Paris fashion week, and the 51st World Dance Conference on Dance Research in Athens Greece. This is Towe's second season touring with the Hiplet Ballerinas Company.



Terri K Woodall, Terri Berri if you like, is a Southside Chicago native, purposeful multifaceted artist, and dancerpreneur who has been training in dance since age 4. Her technical background ranges from Ballet, Modern, Jazz, Tap, Hip Hop, and Musical Theater, and she's had the honor and privilege to train/work with nationally/internationally 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 theater credits include Studio One Dance Theater's productions of *If the Shoe Fits*

CAST PROFILES

(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 Theatricals' *Children of Eden* (Ensemble), *Sister Act The Musical* (Michelle/Ensemble), *Joseph and The Amazing Technicolor DreamCoat* (Ensemble), and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Ensemble/Dance Captain). She is a graduate of The American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA NY/LA), BFA in Dance Theater; and is currently a company member with Chicago's own Rize Pro-Elite (Praize Productions Inc.) and performing apprentice with Hiplet Ballerinas. Woodall is and will forever be rooted in and committed to living a REAL life full of Respect, Encouragement, Abundance, and Love.

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HIplet BACKGROUND

In 1968, compelled by the tragedy of Dr. King's death, Arthur Mitchell decided to start the Dance Theatre of Harlem. A year later, Mitchell took 10 dancers to Jacob's Pillow for a lecture-demonstration and as they entered the theater, a young boy sweeping the stage found himself awestruck by the beautiful black dancers. Inspired, the stagehand signed-up for the evening's class and by the end of the year was extended a scholarship to train at DTH where he later became a principal dancer and company member.

Today, that young boy is better known as Homer Bryant - founder of the Chicago Multi-Cultural Dance Center and creator of the HiPlet™ technique. Bryant's time with the Dance Theatre of Harlem was a catalyst for success in both his professional and personal life. In 1978, he married fellow DTH ballerina, Ronda Sampson, and 3 years later their daughter, Alexandra Victoria, was born with cerebral palsy. Bryant's career highlights include:

- Performing in *The Wiz* motion picture movie alongside Michael Jackson and Diana Ross, Broadway's *Timbuktu!* starring Eartha Kitt, and Drury Lane Water Tower's *Evolution of the Blues*
- Training and touring under prima ballerina Maria Tallchief (one of Balanchine's wives) at the Chicago City Ballet
- Working with Cirque Du Soleil on the creation of *Mystere*, *Alegria*, *Quidam* and *Saltimbanco*

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 entrée into classical ballet. By 1997, the mayor of Chicago renamed his school the "Chicago Multi-Cultural Dance Center" in honor of the studio's work in the community. Over the years, Bryant has continued to incorporate hip-hop and ballet, eventually coining the term HiPlet™ in 2009. CMDC has trained many dancers who now perform with Cirque Du Soleil, Alvin Ailey, Broadway productions and more, but it was social media that propelled the program into another dimension.

In 2016, Brazil's *Só Bailarinos* re-shared posts of Bryant's HiPlet classes; his unique technique causing so much controversy the video amassed over 8 million views. Shortly *BuzzFeed*, the *Huffington Post* and *Good Morning America* were knocking on the door, elevating the view count to over 100 million. After GMA aired their performance, offers for commercial work and collaborations from the world's most notable tastemakers, including Mercedes Benz and Vogue, started pouring in. Today, HiPlet™ has over 1 billion views and the phone has not stopped ringing since.

ARTISTIC MISSION

Hiplet's viral celebrity created such an overwhelming demand that CMDC began turning down many requests. The world was calling but everyone was on hold because most of Bryant's performers were still in school and steady revenue was needed to hire dancers to form a professional company. Despite their immense popularity, the majority of CMDC's funding and student scholarships was still coming from parent investors.

To keep the business growing, CMDC knew they had to create a professional touring company and has partnered with ECE Touring to premiere its first production. Together, they hope to expand upon Hiplet's success and bring this innovative art form to audiences around the world, while continuing to invest in the programs CMDC offers its students and community.

When Bryant opened his studio in Chicago's Dearborn Station, he envisioned a place where dance training was accessible to everyone. Emphasizing his dedication, Bryant shares, "My mom passed away in 2006; my wife passed away in 2008; my daughter passed away in 2010. I am married to my school and these kids." Currently, he has 285 students training at his studio, almost all female and under the age of 18. Through touring, he and the staff at CMDC hope to raise enough money to offer more scholarship opportunities + increase enrollment to 500 students with a goal to recruit & train 50 male dancers off the streets of Chicago.

Bryant sees dance as a way to build character and discipline. Finding inspiration from his daughter's challenges with cerebral palsy, he pursues perfection but understands fallibility. Unable to walk or talk, Bryant would bring Alexandra to his classes where she would sit in her wheelchair and respond to the music by moving her fingers. "You see that? There's a dancer inside of her," he would say. "You can take technique and put it on any child's body. The trick is to make kids feel good, to get them to open up that vision peripherally, to see others in class, not just themselves in the mirror, and to help them join a common purpose."

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 College of DuPage

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Without the generous support of the Friends of the MAC, we would not be the beacon for the arts in DuPage County. We gratefully thank our friends, and we invite others to join them.

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For complete details, visit the MAC Box Office or contact the College of DuPage Foundation at (630) 942-2462 or foundation@codfound.org.

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- Smoking is not permitted in the theater or on campus.
- For your comfort and security, all backpacks and large bags must be checked.
- Please turn off all cell phones and any other alarms while in the theater.
- Emergency phone number at COD Police Department for after-hour calls is (630) 942-2000.
- Latecomers seated at discretion of the House Manager.
- Groups of 10 or more may contact (630) 942-3026 or grouptix@cod.edu to arrange for group discounts.
- If you notice a spill in the theater, please notify an usher.
- McAninch Arts Center volunteers are people who assist the house staff in areas of ticket taking, ushering and general management during performances. To get involved, call (630) 942-3705.
- For **Americans With Disabilities Act** accommodations, call (630) 942-2141 (voice) or (630) 858-9692 (TDD).
- **Infrared Assistive Listening Devices:** For audience members who desire audio amplification of performances, headsets with individual volume controls are now available. You may check out the headsets at the Box Office with a driver's license. *Underwritten by a generous gift from The Knowles Foundation.*

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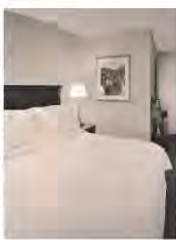
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