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**NCCAkrON and The University of Akron School of Dance, Theatre, and Arts Administration Announce the Second Year of 21st Century Dance Practices**



Photo credits (L to R): Amy Miller (Stephanie Diani), Jesse Factor (Beth Barbis), Bridgman|Packer Dance (courtesy the artist), Bebe Miller (courtesy the artist), Paula Mann (courtesy the artist), Helen Simoneau (Olly Yung with direction by Eli Gray), New Dialect (Andrea Behrends Fecht), Abby Zbikowski (Effy Grey).

AKRON, Ohio (February 1, 2021)—**The National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron (NCCAkrON)** and **The University of Akron School of Dance, Theatre, and Arts Administration (DTAA)** are proud to announce the second year of **21st Century Dance Practices**, a capsule series of classes guest taught by today’s working dance artists. NCCAkrON and DTAA collaboratively curated eight choreographers and dance companies to teach this year’s series including **Amy Miller** (New York, NY), **Jesse Factor** (Slippery Rock, PA), **Bridgman|Packer Dance** (Valley Cottage, NY), **Bebe Miller** (Columbus, OH), **Paula Mann** (Minneapolis, MN), **Helen Simoneau** (Winston-Salem, NC), **New Dialect** (Nashville, TN), and **Abby Zbikowski** (Champaign-Urbana, IL).

The capsule series goes beyond the standard masterclass by representing genres, geographies, cultural and social contexts outside of the traditional binary of modern and ballet in a conservatory setting. This year’s lineup includes artists who explore queer histories, video technology, and social dynamics, among other lines of inquiry.

“As a research and development space for the national dance landscape, NCCAkrON seeks to build a bridge between 20th century working knowledge and building a 21st century dance ecosystem,” says NCCAkrON Executive/Artistic Director **Christy Bolingbroke**. “By collaborating

with The University of Akron, we support our founding partner by challenging its dance program to expand its definition of dance to something broader than ballet or modern dance faster than it can currently evolve its curriculum and operating structure.”

As an initiative, 21st Century Dance Practices first launched in the spring of 2020. The capsule series is the annual spring phase of **Ideas in Motion**, a larger initiative supported by NCCAkron, The University of Akron, The University of Akron Foundation, and the Mary Schiller Myers Lecture Series in the Arts.

“By partnering with NCCAkron on Ideas in Motion, The University of Akron DTAA can responsively augment the curriculum in a way that we wouldn’t be able to do alone. We look forward to the continuation of this initiative and our collaboration to strengthen and diversify The University of Akron’s dance program,” says **Dr. Marc Reed**, Director of The University of Akron’s School of Music and School of Dance, Theatre and Arts Administration.

21st Century Dance Practices will virtually drop into DTAA’s Choreography II or Partnering courses for 8 weeks of the 15-week semester in Spring 2021. The capsule series is open to The University of Akron students. Assistant Lecturer of Dance **Christine Howe**, remarks, "This connection to different artists making their own careers in dance is crucial to students' understanding of what dance can be and what is possible with a degree from The University of Akron."

In addition to guest teaching, 21st Century Dance Practice artists will participate in **Inside the Dancer’s Studio**, an ongoing series of interviews free and open to the public. This series of lunchtime talks explore creativity, the craft of choreography, and navigating an artistic career. All talks will take place virtually on Fridays at 12:30 PM ET starting on February 5th. Visit [nccakron.org](http://nccakron.org) for a full listing of public events.

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### **Inside the Dancer’s Studio Events**

All events are free, virtual, and open to the public. RSVP through:

<https://www.nccakron.org/insidethedancersstudio>

Estimated event run times are 30 minutes total.

Friday, February 5, 2021

12:30 PM ET

Amy Miller (New York, NY)

Friday, February 12, 2021

12:30 PM ET

Jesse Factor (Slippery Rock, PA)

Friday, February 26, 2021  
12:30 PM ET  
Bridgman|Packer Dance (Valley Cottage, NY)

Friday, March 5, 2021  
12:30 PM ET  
Bebe Miller (Columbus, OH)

Friday, March 19, 2021  
12:30 PM ET  
Paula Mann (Minneapolis, MN)

Friday, March 26, 2021  
12:30 PM ET  
Helen Simoneau (Winston-Salem, NC)

Friday, April 9, 2021  
12:30 PM ET  
New Dialect (Nashville, TN)

Friday, April 30, 2021  
12:30 PM ET  
Abby Zbikowski (Champaign-Urbana, IL)

### **About NCCAkron**

The National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron supports the research and development of new work in dance by exploring the full potential of the creative process. In addition to offering studio and technical residencies to make new work, activities focus on catalyzing dialogue and experimentation; creating proximity among artists and dance thinkers; and aggregating resources around dance making. For more information, visit [nccakron.org](http://nccakron.org).

### **About The University of Akron School of Dance, Theatre & Arts Administration**

The University of Akron School of Dance, Theatre, and Arts Administration (DTAA) prepares students for successful performing, academic, and administrative careers in the arts. Its diverse student body works with distinguished, award-winning faculty in classes that offer technical training, theoretical study, practical experience, and creative skill-building. The Dance Program offers both a B.F.A. and B.A. with Business Cognate. The Theatre Arts Program offers a B.A. with four tracks, including applied theatre and social entrepreneurship. The school's M.A. in Arts Administration provides students the education necessary to work in all disciplines of the non-profit arts. DTAA is headed by Marc Reed, D.M.A., who also directs the School of Music. For more information, visit [uakron.edu/dtaa](http://uakron.edu/dtaa).

### **About the Mary Schiller Myers Lecture Series in the Arts**

Ideas in Motion is made possible by the support of The University of Akron Foundation's Mary Schiller Myers Lecture Series in the Arts. NCCAkron is grateful to Stephen E. Myers, trustee of the University of Akron Foundation and the Myers Foundation and son of Mary Schiller Myers, for his support.

Established in 1979 under the sponsorship of the Mary and Louis S. Myers Foundation, this endowed lecture series brings significant representatives of the arts to campus and community annually, to share their particular talents with students, faculty, and residents of the community. These events can include performances, lectures, and masterclasses.

### **Artist Biographies**

#### **Amy Miller** (New York, NY)

Amy Miller, originally from Ohio, is an NYC-based dancer, choreographer, educator, and advocate. Formerly with the Ohio Ballet, she was also a founding member and artistic associate of Cleveland-based GroundWorks DanceTheater. Now a Director and a performing member of Gibney Company in NYC, Miller also focuses on Gibney's Community Action initiatives through facilitating movement workshops with survivors of trauma, conducting both local and international training for artists interested in engaging in social action, developing healthy relationship workshops for young people and raising awareness about the role of the arts in violence prevention. [gibneydance.org](http://gibneydance.org)

#### **Jesse Factor** (Slippery Rock, PA)

Jesse Factor's growing repertoire of solo work has been presented in North American venues such as TQ Live! at the Andy Warhol Museum (Pittsburgh), OUTsider Festival (Austin), Milton Art Bank (Milton), RADfest (Kalamazoo), St. Mark's Church in the Bowery (NYC), and Fierce Queer Burlesque (Toronto). Awards include the Twin Cities Arts Reader Critics Pick and Minnesota Fringe Staff Pick for RELIC at the Minnesota Fringe Festival and Outstanding Dance Performance for Marthagany at the Fresh Fruit Festival-NYC. Jesse received the Kelly Strayhorn Alloy Studios Freshworks residency grant (Pittsburgh, PA) for collaborative work with multimedia artist Scott Andrew. [jessefactor.com](http://jessefactor.com)

#### **Bridgman|Packer Dance** (Valley Cottage, NY)

Art Bridgman and Myrna Packer, Artistic Directors of Bridgman|Packer Dance, are Guggenheim Fellows and 2017 NY Dance and Performance Award recipients (The Bessies). Their collaborative work focuses on integrating live performance and video technology to blur the line between image and reality, explore identity, and reveal multiple layers of consciousness. They are also recipients of four NPN Creation Fund Awards and numerous grants from the NEA, National Dance Project, NYSCA, and NYFA. In NYC they have been presented by Lincoln Center, City Center's Fall for Dance Festival, Central Park Summerstage, Sheen Center, and Baryshnikov Arts Center. They have toured throughout the US and abroad to venues including Spoleto Festival USA, Jacob's Pillow, Bates Dance Festival, ICA/Boston, Dance St. Louis, Munich International Dance Festival, Festival Internacional de Artes Escenicas (Panama),

Kintetsu Theater (Osaka, Japan), Festival Internacional Chihuahua (Mexico), The Beirut Spring Festival (Lebanon), and Tanforum (Budapest). [Bridgmanpacker.org](http://Bridgmanpacker.org)

**Bebe Miller** (Columbus, OH)

Bebe Miller, an American choreographer, dancer, and director, first performed her work at NYC's Dance Theater Workshop in 1978. Interested in "finding a physical language for the human condition," she formed Bebe Miller Company in 1985. The Company has performed extensively in the UK, Europe, Africa, and throughout the US. Miller's choreography noted for its mix of virtuosic, athletic speed, and fragile humanity has been commissioned by Oregon Ballet Theatre, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Boston Ballet, Philadanco, the UK's Phoenix Dance Company, and PACT Dance Company of Johannesburg, South Africa. She was named a Master of African American Choreography by the Kennedy Center, has received four "Bessie" awards, United States Artists and Guggenheim Fellowships, honorary doctorates from Ursinus College, and Franklin & Marshall College, and is one of the inaugural class of Doris Duke Artist Award recipients. [bebemillercompany.org](http://bebemillercompany.org)

**Paula Mann** (Minneapolis, MN)

Throughout her long and varied choreographic career, Paula Mann has created over 55 dance works. From 1977-1987 she lived and worked in New York, becoming one of the primary forces in the downtown dance scene. Her work has been presented throughout the U.S, Canada, and Italy. In 2018 "INVISIBLE", a work for 10 women ages 25-78, opened to rave reviews and sold-out audiences. In 2018 "Pie Equals Square" was presented by The Zoo Southside Main Theater in Edinburgh Scotland. She is the recipient of numerous grants and awards including a Bush Artist Fellowship, a 2019 McKnight Fellowship for Choreography, and MN State Arts Board awards. From 1993-2013 Mann was full-time faculty at the U of M. She is a graduate of New York University. [timetrackdance.org](http://timetrackdance.org)

**Helen Simoneau** (Winston-Salem, NC)

Helen Simoneau, a native of Rimouski, Québec, is the artistic director of Helen Simoneau Danse. Described as "a Choreographer-on-the-rise" — Dance Magazine, Simoneau has been commissioned by The Juilliard School, Oregon Ballet Theatre, American Dance Festival, Springboard Danse Montréal, and Swiss International Coaching Project (SiWiC). She was a resident artist at Baryshnikov Arts Center, NYU/Tisch, Bates Dance Festival, and received fellowships from The NYU Center for Ballet, Ailey's New Directions Lab, and the Bogliasco Foundation. Simoneau was awarded 1st place for Choreography at the 13th Internationales Solo-Tanz-Theater Festival in Stuttgart and was presented at PACT-Zollverein in Essen as a finalist for the Kurt Jooss Prize (Germany). She is currently a Choreographic Fellow at New York City Center. [helensimoneau.org](http://helensimoneau.org)

**New Dialect** (Nashville, TN)

Since 2013, New Dialect has gained national recognition for its efforts to contribute to the evolution of contemporary dance through imaginative, socially relevant outreach and performances. New Dialect aims to facilitate opportunities for movers and audiences of all kinds to explore the wide variety of movement vocabularies that exist in the world of contemporary dance. We believe it is the nature of our art form to speak to the present while pointing to the future. In support of this cause, we strive to foster communally minded learning environments, where artists are given “tools not rules” that allow them to connect deeply with their bodies as they skillfully interpret a broad range of movement languages with authenticity and courage. [newdialect.org](http://newdialect.org)

**Abby Zbikowski** (Champaign-Urbana, IL)

Abby Zbikowski founded her company Abby Z and the New Utility in 2012, which has performed nationally at Jacob’s Pillow and the Fuse Box Festival, among others. Zbikowski is a 2020 United States Artists Fellow, a 2017 Juried Bessie Award recipient, and was awarded a “Choreographer of the Future” commission from Dance Umbrella UK in 2018. She is an inaugural Caroline Hearst Choreographer-In-Residence at the Lewis Center of the Arts at Princeton University (2017-19) and is currently an artist in residence at New York Live Arts (2018-20). She is an assistant professor of Dance at the University of Illinois and on faculty at the American Dance Festival. Zbikowski holds a BFA in dance from Temple University and an MFA from The Ohio State University. [abbyznewutility.org](http://abbyznewutility.org)