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**THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHOREOGRAPHY-AKRON ANNOUNCES
INAUGURAL KNIGHT CHOREOGRAPHY PRIZE RECIPIENT
ROSIE HERRERA**

*– Made Possible by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation,
This Award Invests in the Future of Dance –*



Photo credit (left to right): Rosie Herrera; photos by Adam Reign and Jared McEntire.

AKRON, OH (May 22, 2024) — **The National Center for Choreography-Akron (NCCAkron)** today announces **Rosie Herrera** (Miami, FL) as the inaugural recipient of the \$50,000 Knight Choreography Prize. Made possible by Knight Foundation, this award is designed to support the artistic experimentation and career longevity of choreographers in the United States. Each year the award will honor a living choreographer whose body of work is distinguished not only for their artistry but also for their originality of thought and impact. The award celebrates choreographers who provide significant contributions to the dance field, expand audiences for dance, and ensure the artform has a prominent place in U.S. culture. Herrera will receive an unrestricted cash award of \$30,000, plus \$20,000 in programmatic support over two years, to be co-designed with NCCAkron.

NCCAkron Executive/Artistic Director Christy Bolingbroke shares, “There are fewer than a dozen national awards for performing artists that acknowledge excellence with unrestricted funds. Even fewer are dedicated to dance and choreography at the national level. Artists consistently share that this kind of unrestricted award can be life and career changing, encouraging them to continue pressing forward. With the creation of the Knight Choreography Prize, made possible by Knight Foundation, NCCAkron can continue to advocate for dance as a central part of U.S. culture, raise the profile of preeminent choreographers, and invest in the future of the artform.”

Rosie Herrera is a Cuban-American dancer, choreographer, and artistic director of Rosie Herrera Dance Theatre, founded in 2009. Over 15 years, her daring, vivid, multifaceted dance-theater work has combined personal experience – her Cuban heritage and Catholic upbringing – with broader cultural and socio-political themes and genres like drag, burlesque, contemporary dance, and hip-hop, all informed by her career as a dancer, choreographer, cabaret and burlesque performer, and classically-trained opera singer. Guillermo Perez of the *Miami New Times* describes, “Her shows could take us clubbing or give us a buzz in quite a bash for the senses, but there was always that startling peek behind the tinselled curtain and sober moments when a beleaguered figure signaled for the warmth and strength of human hands.”

Bolingbroke continues, “In her award materials, Rosie stated, *To be forward thinking requires a clear understanding of where you came from and how you got where you are.* This point of view is clear in Rosie’s body of work, featuring hybridity and bilingualism as it generates joy, catharsis, and community. Rosie Herrera shows up and shows out as an enduring artist from Miami. All of which excited the selection committee about anything she does next, and NCCAkron is delighted to be a part of her continuing journey.”

Although not a prerequisite for the award, Herrera has a longitudinal relationship with NCCAkron. In 2022, she participated as a visiting guest artist for the Ideas in Motion: 21st Century Dance Practices program, a partnership between NCCAkron and The University of Akron School of Dance, Theatre, and Arts Administration. Rosie is also an alumna of the Creative Administration Research program, through which artists engage in investigative retreats; dedicate time to project long-term artistic goals; examine chronic pain points across operations; reconsider current habits and practices; and identify possible administrative experiments to evolve business operations.

With an initial investment of \$5 million from Knight Foundation, NCCAkron was established in 2015 to address research and development opportunities in dance. This nonprofit organization has become an intellectual matchmaker between national choreographers and the robust cultural ecology in and around Akron, OH, as well as operating as a hyperagent for dance across the national landscape. In just eight years, NCCAkron has worked with over 400 dance artists across 65 cities. In 2022, Knight Foundation invested an additional \$1.5 million to

establish this annual unrestricted cash and programmatic award for choreographers and sponsor it in perpetuity.

“In establishing the Knight Choreography Prize at the National Center for Choreography-Akron we wanted to ensure that preeminent U.S. choreographers were being recognized and celebrated for their artistry, originality of thought, experimentation, and sustained contributions to the field of dance. Rosie Herrera exemplifies these characteristics and so deserves to be its inaugural recipient,” comments Victoria Rogers, Vice President of Arts at Knight Foundation.

About the Knight Choreography Prize

The Knight Choreography Prize is designed to support the artistic experimentation and career longevity of choreographers in the United States. NCCAkron intends for the award to provide essential time and space for the creative process, for research, and for rigorous play and positive failure. NCCAkron commits to co-create activities and residencies with artists as equal partners and promote equity in the arts by elevating underrepresented voices that are a valuable part of the 21st century dance ecosystem and the future of the artform.

NCCAkron invited dance artists, dance stakeholders, and NCCAkron alumni across the U.S. to nominate a choreographer for this inaugural award. An NCCAkron committee then selected five artists from that nomination list, based on established criteria, and those artists were invited to submit application materials. The final selection committee comprised NCCAkron alumni, board members, and Knight City artists.

The inaugural recipient will be announced in May 2024 and the second awardee will be announced in the Fall of 2024. Hereafter, the Knight Choreography Prize will be announced once a year, in the Fall.

About Rosie Herrera

Rosie Herrera is a Cuban-American dancer, choreographer, and artistic director of Rosie Herrera Dance Theater in Miami. She is a graduate of New World School with a BFA in Dance Performance. She has been commissioned by The Miami Light Project, The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, Ballet Hispanico, José Limón Dance Company, The Ringling Museum, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Santa Barbara Dance Theater, NuDialect, GroundWorks Dance Theater, Houston Met Dance, Boston Dance Theater, Orchestra Miami, New World Symphony, and the American Dance Festival (ADF) in 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016, 2018 and 2022. Her company, Rosie Herrera Dance Theatre, has been presented by the Northrop Dance Series, New World Symphony, Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, Miami Light Project, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Texas A & M University, Duncan Theater, The Annenberg Center, Maui Arts and Cultural Center, Dance Place, Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans, The Yard at Martha's Vineyard, Alys Stephens Center, Wilson Center at Cape Fear University, The Rialto Center, Gotham Dance at Skirball and Focus Dance at The Joyce as well as by The American Dance Festival at the Joyce NYC in 2016 and 2018.

Rosie Herrera is a 2016 USArtist Sarah Arison Choreographic Fellow, a 2010 and 2018 MANCC Choreographic Fellow, a 2014 Bates Dance Festival Artist in Residence, a 2016 Bessie Schoenberg Fellow, and a 2011 and 2016 Miami Dance Fellow. She was awarded a Princess Grace Choreographic Fellowship for her work with Ballet Hispanico in 2013 and is a recent 2024 Guggenheim Choreographic Fellow.

About NCCAkron

The National Center for Choreography-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.

A discrete organization of its own, separate from The University of Akron but with offices based there, the establishment and general operation of NCCAkron are made possible by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

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