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**THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHOREOGRAPHY - AKRON ANNOUNCES
THOUGHT PARTNERS FOR ITS FIFTH
CREATIVE ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH COHORT**



Photo credits (L to R): Conrhonda Baker (photo by Decisive Moment), Hope Mohr (photo courtesy of the artist), and Marya Wethers (photo Scott Shaw).

AKRON, Ohio (March 22, 2024)—**The National Center for Choreography - Akron (NCCAkron)** announces Thought Partners for the new cohort of its **Creative Administration Research (CAR)** program. Thought Partners are paired with choreographers in the dance field to investigate administrative practices that support the artist’s creative practices. Thought Partners include **Conrhonda Baker** (Atlanta, GA) working with **Kara Jenelle Wade** (Atlanta, GA), **Hope Mohr** (San Francisco, CA) working with **taylor knight & anna thompson** of **slowdanger** (Pittsburgh, PA), and **Marya Wethers** (Brooklyn, NY) working with **Marina Magalhães** (Santa Cruz, CA).

The CAR program launched in 2020 with lead support from the Mellon Foundation, and with \$1 million in renewed funding granted in 2023, has initiated a fifth cohort for a total of 22 Artist Teams from across the U.S. These teams include the choreographer, Thought Partner, and NCCAkron staff members. Each Artist Team engages in an artist-dedicated Investigative Retreat, with time and space to identify administrative experimentations that support creative practices. Rather than reinforce the one-size-fits-all approach, Creative Administration Research

invites Artist Teams to imagine multiple ways forward. The paired Thought Partner provides additional accountability and a sounding board between Investigative Retreats.

Thought Partners include arts administrators, artists, funders, presenters, and those working outside the dance field. NCCAkron identified potential Thought Partners from participants in the CAR Work-In-Process Series discussions, which has brought together 80+ thinkers and leaders across the arts sector to reflect and imagine a twenty-first-century dance ecosystem. Choreographers chose their Thought Partner from an NCCAkron curated selection of possible pairings.

“The CAR program is so special because it supports artists who are otherwise focused on making their artistic work and trying to run their arts business that it can be really difficult to prioritize this type of “thinking work” about new ways to organize how they do what they do,” shared Thought Partner Maríya Wethers. “The CAR program invites artists into an ongoing and flexible process that allows them to focus on that “thinking work” along with financial support and a Thought Partner.”

The fifth cohort of choreographers begins their Creative Administration Research in Spring 2024. For a list of all program participants, alumni, and Thought Partners, [click here](#).

“I’m looking forward to exploring the interweaving of artmaking and arts administration into a unified creative practice with taylor and anna of slowdanger,” shared choreographer Hope Mohr. “Our shared passions for collaborative, interdisciplinary performance will provide rich territory for dialogue and research. It’s an honor to be a part of NCCAkron’s leadership work creating spaces for essential, long-term exchanges among artists.”

In fall 2024, NCCAkron will host another open application period for the sixth cohort of choreographers. The new artist teams will be onboarding in early spring 2025. All active Artists and Thought Partners will join NCCAkron for the third National Summit Convening in the summer of 2026. In addition to growing the program through admin experiments, NCCAkron continues to seek opportunities to share program learnings with the wider performing arts field. A book on creative administration edited by **Tonya Lockyer** (Suquamish, WA) and a collaboration between NCCAkron and the University of Akron Press is expected later this year.

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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.

A discrete organization of its own, separate from the University, the establishment and general operation of NCCAkron are made possible by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

The Creative Administration Research program is made possible with lead support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

About The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the nation's largest supporter of the arts and humanities. Since 1969, the Foundation has been guided by its core belief that the humanities and arts are essential to human understanding. The Foundation believes that the arts and humanities are where we express our complex humanity, and that everyone deserves the beauty, transcendence, and freedom that can be found there. Through our grants, we seek to build just communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive. Learn more at mellon.org.

About the Thought Partners

Conrhonda E. Baker (Atlanta, GA) has a passion for the performing arts grounded in her dance background, sparked by taking after-school classes at a county-wide recreational facility in rural northeast Georgia. Having grown up with limited access to the arts, she understands the importance of exposing children to creative outlets and creating opportunities for artistic expression. She founded The Bese Saka in 2018 as a way to live out her Christian faith by actively intervening and building equity into the process of securing institutional funding support. She believes in holistic trust-based, regenerative, and restorative approaches to grantmaking. Her fundraising, government affairs, and program development experience developed through serving on many grant review panels and through work with South Arts, Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, Alabama Dance Council, Vulcan Park and Museum, Birmingham Museum of Art, and Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation. She holds a Master of Arts Management from Carnegie Mellon University and a Bachelor of Arts in African American Studies with a minor in Dance Education from The University of Georgia. [linkedin.com/in/conrhonda](https://www.linkedin.com/in/conrhonda)

Hope Mohr (San Francisco, CA) is an interdisciplinary artist and an advocate. She has made performance for over 30 years in collaboration with poets, sculptors, composers, painters, and puppeteers. Trained classically at San Francisco Ballet and the Merce Cunningham Studio, Mohr performed with several post-modern pioneers, including Lucinda Childs and Trisha Brown. She has worked extensively in museum and gallery contexts, including at 18th Street Arts Center (LA), di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art (Sonoma), Moody Center for the Arts (Houston), SFMOMA, ICA San Francisco & San Jose Museum of Art. Hope teaches "Bodies in Practice & Performance" at California College of the Arts. In 2007, she founded Hope Mohr Dance (HMD). In 2010, she founded HMD's presenting program, The Bridge Project. In 2020, she co-stewarded the organization's transition to a model of distributed leadership and a new name: Bridge Live Arts. In 2023, Hope transitioned out of Co-Directorship; she now works as an

independent artist. Her book, *Shifting Cultural Power: Case Studies and Questions in Performance*, was published by the National Center for Choreography in 2020. She is also a licensed attorney with a practice dedicated to serving artists. hopemohr.org // movementlaw.net

Maryá Wethers (Brooklyn, NY) has lived and worked on the lands of Lenapehoking (NYC) since 1997. She is a Creative Producer and Independent Curator, currently working with Movement Research as the Director of the GPS/Global Practice Sharing program and with artists Edisa Weeks/DELIRIOUS Dances, OzuzuDances, and Rosy Simas Danse. As a curator, she conceived of the three-week performance series “Gathering Place: Black Queer Land(ing)” at Gibney Dance (2018) and curated for Mount Tremper Arts Watershed Lab Residency (2019 & 2018), the Queer NY International Arts Festival (2016 & 2015) and Out of Space @ BRIC Studio for Danspace Project (2003-2007). Her writings have been published in *Configurations in Motion: Performance Curation and Communities of Color* (2016 & 2015), organized by Thomas F. DeFrantz at Duke University, and the *Movement Research Performance Journal* 25th Anniversary Issue #27/28 (Spring 2005). She has served on selection panels for several presenting and funding organizations in NY and nationally.

Maryá is also a contemporary dancer and received a 2017 NY Dance & Performance (“Bessie”) Award for Outstanding Performance with the Skeleton Architecture collective. She graduated from Mount Holyoke College with a BA in Dance and a minor in African-American Studies in 1997.