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**TWO AKRON ARTS PROJECTS FOCUSED ON SOCIAL JUSTICE
RECEIVE OHIO ARTS COUNCIL GRANT**

Akron Civic Theatre & NCCAkrON Leverage Akron Civic Commons Funds from State Support

AKRON, Ohio (March 30, 2022) – The Akron Civic Theatre and National Center for Choreography-Akron (NCCAkrON) are thrilled to announce their teams each recently received \$15,000 from the Ohio Arts Council Arts Resiliency Initiative. All \$30,000 will go directly to support Akron artists: choreographer Dominic Moore-Dunson and the creative team and performers of The Civic’s Millennial Theatre Project’s production of *Say It Loud*.

The Ohio Arts Council grant will enable NCCAkrON to continue supporting Moore-Dunson to develop his next work *inCOPnegro*. This evening-length dance-theater work and podcast project explores safety, storytelling, parenthood, and police relations in Black communities.

NCCAkrON’s relationship with Moore-Dunson is an example of the Center’s longitudinal investment in artists. Moore-Dunson has participated in a space residency and a Dancing Lab through NCCAkrON, and has also co-hosted a grant writing internship; additionally, he’s part of NCCAkrON’s Creative Administration Research program.

“My relationship with NCCAkrON has helped me move at the pace that is right for my work,” Moore-Dunson says. “NCCAkrON helps my team think about big-picture goals and the right kinds of partnerships and funding for our work. This kind of institutional support is invaluable.”

The Akron Civic Theatre’s grant will be used to support four free public performances of *Say It Loud*, an original theatrical piece created by Akron-based Black theater artists Francine Parr and Maya Nicholson and performed by six local Black actors.

The performance piece of *Say It Loud* consists of a series of monologues scripted directly from narratives gleaned from these local sources, offering authentic representations of the feelings,



frustrations, fears, and suffering of community members from all walks of life. The actors speak in the voices of community members who have contributed their stories.

Four performances will be presented in May and June 2022, including an Akron Civic Theatre performance on May 25, the second anniversary of George Floyd's murder. Additional performances are scheduled for Cleveland, Cuyahoga Falls, and Akron's Kenmore neighborhood.

In 2021, Akron Civic Commons (ACC) funding supported Moore-Dunson's initial choreographic research through NCCAkrON, engaging community members (including Black police officers, criminal justice workers, and residents) in Akron as storytellers, and in 2020 funded the development of *Say It Loud* as a way to connect Parr and Nicholson's storytelling to its residents of Summit Lake.

"The early investment of Akron Civic Commons, combined with that of the Akron Community Foundation, provided the base for a project which has successfully combined local voice with consistent and broadly-distributed messaging regarding social justice issues," says Parr. "Ohio Arts Council funding provides us with the opportunity to expand our physical reach regionally while continuing to reach thousands of people per week virtually."

The work of ACC is centered around investments in three neighborhoods and the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail that connects them.

ACC is led by local residents and helps knit together isolated communities through collaboration and the reimagination of our public spaces. Together the neighbors aim to create temporary and permanent design features and regular programming to re-establish the 100-acre Summit Lake as a place of civic pride and play—bridging diverse neighborhoods and fostering economic development and public life in Akron's downtown.

For more information about Akron Civic Commons, visit akronciviccommons.org.

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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.

The establishment and general operation of NCCAkrON are made possible by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Biography



Dominic Moore-Dunson

Dominic Moore-Dunson (he/him/his) has received numerous recognitions including 2019 Cleveland Arts Prize's Emerging Artist Award for Theatre & Dance, a 2019 fellow of The Ann & Weston Hicks Choreography Program at Jacob's Pillow, 2019 Akron Arts Alive! "Outstanding Artists in Dance", and 2019 "New Agent" by MOCA Cleveland, and 2021 Associate Artist at Atlantic Center for the Arts #180 with Doug Varone. Currently, Moore-Dunson is a Research Resident Artist at The National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron (NCCAkron) and helped launch the Akron Black Artist Guild in Akron, OH earlier this year.

dommooredun.com

About the Akron Civic Theatre

The Akron Civic Theater was built in 1929 by Marcus Loew and designed by famed theater architect, John Eberson. The interior structure was fashioned after a Moorish castle featuring Mediterranean decor, including medieval carvings, authentic European antiques and Italian alabaster sculptures. In June 2001, the Akron Civic Theatre underwent the most comprehensive restoration and expansion project in its history, whereby the theater was brought up to modern performance and patron standards. The theater now attracts nearly 110,000 people annually for nationally touring concerts, comedians, and family shows, as well as a wide variety of events featuring local and regional artists. For more information visit www.akroncivic.com

About Say It Loud

Created by Akron theater artists Francine Parr and Maya Nicholson and produced by the Akron Civic Theatre's Millennial Theatre Project, Say It Loud is a multi-disciplinary, multi-platform vehicle that shares community voices around the issue of systemic racism. Deploying memes on its social media along with live performances throughout the region, Say It Loud is designed to consistently and clearly provide a platform for that voice.