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**THE ENCOUNTER: AKRON AT RUBBER CITY THEATRE, AUGUST 10-12  
– An NE Ohio Community Cast with Choreography by Kimberly Bartosik –**



Pictured L to R, T to B: Kimberly Bartosik (photo Maria Baranova); the cast of *The Encounter: Akron* – Melissa Ajayi, Neema Bal, Katie Beck, Kobe Calain, Kay DePew, Julia Dillard, Josy Jones, Estefania Montes, Elyse Morckel, Britt Oliver, J2 Shepherd, and Larry White Jr (photos courtesy of the artists); and *The Encounter: Buffalo* at Torn Space Theater 2022 (photo Mark Duggan).

AKRON, Ohio (June 21, 2023) — **Rubber City Theatre** (RCT) announces performances of ***The Encounter: Akron***, a live physical theater work by **Kimberly Bartosik/daela** (Brooklyn, NY) featuring a cast of professional, pre-professional, and non-professional performers from Northeast Ohio. *The Encounter: Akron* is developed in partnership with RCT, the National Center for Choreography-Akron (NCCAkron), and CDS Creative Productions. *The Encounter: Akron* performances take place August 10-12.

*The Encounter: Akron* is an expansive performance project created by choreographer/director Kimberly Bartosik. Joined by creative associate Burr Johnson, Bartosik has been creating unique *Encounter* projects in communities worldwide, exploring intergenerational cross-geographic, global conversation about the ferocious power of the body as a form of communication. The work is an encounter with oneself, pulling from what people currently carry in their bodies—grief, hope, fear, desire, newfound power—pulsing through and between generations.

“It is incredibly exciting to collaborate with NCCAkron and present *The Encounter: Akron* as part of Rubber City Theatre’s 10th Anniversary Season,” shared Dane Leasure, Artistic Director of Rubber City Theatre. “*The Encounter* features a unique cast of professional and non-professional performers from the Akron community. We plan to continue our exploration of different types of theater and performance.”

## **Cast**

*The Encounter: Akron* features a regional cast of professional, pre-professional, and non-professional performers.

**Melissa Ajayi**, 37 (Shaker Heights, OH), is a recreation therapist, mother of two children, loves to be outdoors, and is learning to garden.

**Neema Bal**, 26 (Akron, OH), is co-artistic director of Gum-Dip Theatre, was born and raised in a refugee camp, and has a passion for theatre and a strong dedication to uplifting and advocating for refugee children.

**Katie Beck**, 31 (Akron, OH), also co-artistic director of Gum-Dip Theatre, is a theatre maker, creative community builder, and social entrepreneur who loves her house plants, two cats, and the North Hill neighborhood.

**Kobe Calain**, 20 (Newton Falls, OH), loves to move, dance, perform, and make people smile.

**Kay DePew**, 28 (Akron, OH), former Miss Akron, is an experimental artist and business student.

**Julia Dillard**, 37 (Cleveland, OH), loves swimming in the ocean, making plum tortes, chasing her toddler, and being in nature.

**Josy Jones**, (Akron, OH), is from a theatre background and tends to ask a lot of questions that she answers with research and movement; dinosaurs are her favorite animal.

**Estefania Montes**, 26 (Akron, OH), loves The Monkees, enjoys game shows, and lives for making memories with their partner and family.

**Elyse Morckel**, 31 (Akron, OH), enjoys snuggles with her cat David, baking macarons, supporting her local library, and hiking the many trails a part of the Summit Metro Parks.

**Britt Oliver**, 39 (Akron, OH), enjoys yoga, travel, museums, painting, and any activity that sparks creativity.

**J2 Shepherd**, 11 (Akron, OH), loves music, dancing, and singing. He also enjoys learning to play new instruments, playing video games, and joking around with his friends. His happy place is at home surrounded by his family.

**Larry White Jr**, 21 (Akron, OH), has a passion for baking sweets, obscure fashion looks, and rarely is seen without a smile.

## **Performance Details**

*The Encounter: Akron*

August 10 at 7pm, August 11 at 7pm, August 12 at 3pm

Rubber City Theatre

Sandefur Theatre in Guzzetta Hall

228 E Buchtel Ave, Akron, OH 44325

Tickets: Pay what you can, with a suggested donation of \$0-10. A limited number of free tickets are available for each show. Reserve at [bit.ly/theencounterakron-tickets](https://bit.ly/theencounterakron-tickets).

Bartosik's past *Encounter* projects include *The Encounter: Buffalo*, created in partnership with Torn Space Theater; *The Encounter: Italia*, supported by the Italian Ministry of Culture; *The Encounter: Rockland* (2023), created in partnership with The Strand Theater; and *The Encounter* in NYC, which had its world premiere as part of French Institute/Alliance Francaise

*Crossing the Line Festival*, with performances in FIAF's Le Skyroom. For more information on the work, visit [daela.org/the-encounter](http://daela.org/the-encounter).

This engagement marks Kimberly Bartosik's third visit to Akron. NCCAkron hosted her as a Dancing Lab: Female Choreographers participant in September 2017 and for a Technical Residency in August 2018.

*The Encounter: Akron* is made possible by lead support from the Knight Arts Akron Community Fund at The Miami Foundation. NCCAkron received a \$125,000 grant to be invested in local collaborations expanding presentation opportunities for dance with theater organizations in Akron. Anchor events resulting from this investment include Dominic Moore-Dunson's *inCOPnegro: Aftermath* at Center for Applied Theatre and Active Culture (CATAC) and Kimberly Bartosik's *The Encounter: Akron* at Rubber City Theatre.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***About Kimberly Bartosik/daela***

Kimberly Bartosik is an NYC-based choreographer, performer, educator, and essayist who creates viscerally provocative, ferociously intimate choreographic projects that dramatically illuminate the ephemeral nature of performance while critically, tenderly, and violently etching away at deeply distressing threads of our society.

Bartosik is a 2020 Bessie Award Honoree for Outstanding Performance & Outstanding Performer (Burr Johnson) for her work *through the mirror of their eyes* (New York Live Arts). She is a 2023 Ragdale Fellowship Residency Artist; a 2021 recipient of a Doris Duke Foundation Performing Artist Recovery Fund in the New York Community Trust; a 2019 Guggenheim Fellowship in Choreography; and a 2020 Virginia B. Toulmin Women Leaders in Dance Fellowship at Center for Ballet and the Arts at NYU. She was a 2017 Dancing Lab Artist at NCCAkron.

Bartosik's work has been commissioned and presented by BAM Next Wave Festival, New York Live Arts, LUMBERYARD, The Chocolate Factory Theater (2025), American Realness, FIAF's Crossing the Line Festival, Abrons Art Center, Danspace Project, The Kitchen, La Mama, and others. She has toured to Supersense: Festival of the Ecstatic (Melbourne, Australia), Bratislava in Movement, WexnerArts Center, Dance Place, American Dance Festival, The Yard, MASS MoCA/Jacob's Pillow, FlynnSpace, Bates Dance Festival, Columbia College, and others.

Select awards include National Dance Project (NDP) Production & Touring Grant and Community Engagement Fund; MAP Fund; Jerome Foundation; FUSED (French-US Exchange in Dance); Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, USArtists International; Creative Arts Initiative (CAI); New Music USA, Live Music for Dance; and Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Grants to Artists and Emergency Grants.

A member of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company for nine years, Bartosik received a Bessie Award for Exceptional Artistry in his work. For more information on Kimberly's work, visit [daela.org](http://daela.org) or follow [@kimberlybartosik\\_daela](https://twitter.com/kimberlybartosik_daela).

### ***About CDS Creative Productions***

Carlos Diaz Stoop (he/him/his) is a full-time Associate Producer at Beth Morrison Projects (BMP), a Brooklyn-based opera and music theatre production company. In 2022 Carlos was also the Associate Director of BMP: Producer Academy - an 8-week nuts and bolts course designed to prepare the next generation of Creative Producers. Previously he was employed as the Program Associate at The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, a multi-disciplinary grantmaker in the arts in Philadelphia, where he supported the Performance program, cross-program functions, and served as the coordinator and founding member of the Center's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee.

As an Independent Creative Producer and Artist Advocate Carlos supports theatre, music, dance, opera, community engagement, and social justice projects with various organizations and individual artists along the East Coast including: Girard College (Be Holding), Philadelphia Contemporary (Convalescence and The Re-Emancipation of Social Dance), Raja Feather Kelly, Yarn/Wire, Tyshawn Sorey, Ross Gay, Kimberly Bartosik/Daela.

Carlos is also a member of CIPA (The Creative Independent Producer Alliance), a group of over 300 Independent Creative Producers worldwide where he sits on the Organizing Team aiding in the oversight and strategic planning of CIPA's continued growth as a hub for Community, Mentorship, and Advocacy for Independent Creative Producers in the performing arts sector.

### ***About Rubber City Theatre***

Rubber City Theatre's mission is to bring affordable and professional theatre to the Akron area. Its intimate and innovative productions aim to open the eyes and the hearts of audiences in an intentionally accessible, inclusive, and safe space. [rubbercitytheatre.com](http://rubbercitytheatre.com)

### ***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).

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

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