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**NCCAkrON AND THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON SCHOOL OF DANCE, THEATRE, AND
ARTS ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCE THE FIFTH YEAR OF
21ST CENTURY DANCE PRACTICES**



Photo credits (L to R): Ruby Morales (photo Shaunté Glover), Takahiro Yamamoto (photo DJ Schaller), Christopher Unpezverde Núñez (photo Walter Włodarczyk), Héléne Simoneau (photo Whitney Browne), Angelina Ramirez (photo Steven Meckler), and J'Sun Howard (photo courtesy of the artist).

AKRON, Ohio (January 30, 2024)—**The National Center for Choreography-Akron** (NCCAkrON) and **The University of Akron School of Dance, Theatre, and Arts Administration** (DTAA) are proud to announce the fifth year of **21st Century Dance Practices**, a capsule series of classes guest taught by today's working dance artists. The six choreographers include **Ruby Morales** (Phoenix, AZ), **Takahiro Yamamoto** (Portland, OR / Boston, MA), **Christopher Unpezverde Núñez** (New York, NY), **Héléne Simoneau** (Montreal, Québec / New York, NY), **Angelina Ramirez** (Tucson, AZ), and **J'Sun Howard** (Chicago, IL).

21st Century Dance Practices is a capsule series that represents genres, geographies, and cultural and social contexts outside the traditional binary of modern dance and ballet in a conservatory setting. This year's lineup includes artists who question identity and movement through cultural and social dance forms like breaking, cumbia, and flamenco; explore interdisciplinary practices such as spoken word and accessibility; and utilize improvisation and mind-body integration. The series will challenge students to stretch past the basic dance curriculum and receive benefits beyond the typical one-off master class.

"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.”

21st Century Dance Practices takes place for six of the 15 weeks in DTAA's Modern I-IV Spring 2024 semester. **Bolingbroke** adds, “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.”

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

In addition to teaching classes, visiting artists will participate in recorded interviews for NCCAkron's podcast **Inside the Dancer's Studio**. H el ene Simoneau and J'Sun Howard will also bring some of their respective casts to continue developing their current works and offer work-in-process showings to the UA community and the general public.

NCCAkron will work with founding partner DANCECleveland to support H el ene Simoneau Danse. DANCECleveland will host a master class and work-in-process showing, both held at The Natatorium of Cuyahoga Falls on Saturday, March 9: master class 10-11:30am and work-in-progress showing at 3pm. COLLIDE and the City of Cuyahoga Falls are partners for these events.

J'Sun Howard will offer a work-in-process showing in Guzzetta Hall on The University of Akron campus the week of March 18. Date and time TBA.

Both work-in-process showings are free.

Artist biographies are listed below.

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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.

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 a 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 with 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.

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. NCCAkrone 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

Ruby Morales (Phoenix, AZ) is committed to equity, facilitating life-affirming spaces, and cultivating community relationships rooted in reciprocity, trust, and love through her artmaking. She's a dance activist investigating culturally informed teaching methods, circular leadership models, and her relationship with movement as a b-girl and Mexican-style cumbia. After receiving a BFA from Arizona State University, she began touring with CONTRA-TIEMPO Activist Dance Theater and Tucson, AZ-based choreographer Yvonne Montoya. She recently toured with internationally renowned creative Liz Lerman, performing *Wicked Bodies*. In partnership with the city of Tempe (AZ), she also toured her own evening-length show, *Breaking Pachanga*. She's CONTRA-TIEMPO's Resource Director and co-founder of The Pachanga Collective. In recognition of her leadership, Ruby is the inaugural recipient of The Association of Performing Arts Professionals Spark for Change award and the 2023 Performing Artist Mayor's Arts award (AZ). She continues to learn and lead as a previous B.A.C. Fellowship Mentor, a 2021 National Association of Latino Arts and Culture (NALAC) Advocacy Leadership Fellow, a 2021 Intercultural Leadership Institute Fellow, a 2023 NALAC Leadership Institute Fellow, and a 2023 Critical Response Process Certification Program participant. Ruby has been awarded a Research and Development and Professional Development Grant from the AZ Commission on the Arts, The Artist Forward Fund from Artlink, a Phoenix Project Support Grant and Stabilization Grant, and others. rubymorales.com

Takahiro Yamamoto (Portland, OR / Boston, MA) is a multidisciplinary artist and choreographer. His current conceptual investigations revolve around the phenomenological effects of time, the embodied approach to the presence of nothingness, and the social/emotional

implications of visibility. He has received support from New England Foundation for the Arts, Bogliasco Foundation, Oregon Community Foundation, MacDowell, NCCAkrón, National Performance Network, Japan Foundation, Regional Arts & Culture Council, Africa Contemporary Arts Consortium, and others. His performance and visual art works have been presented at Portland Art Museum, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Diverseworks, Contemporary Arts Center Cincinnati, The Henry Art Gallery, and GoDown Arts Centre Nairobi, among other venues. Yamamoto holds an MFA in Visual Studies from Pacific Northwest College of Art. He is part of the Portland-based support group Physical Education with Allie Hankins, keyon gaskin, and Lu Yim. Yamamoto is currently a visiting professor at Studio for Interrelated Media department at Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston, MA. takahiroyamamoto.com

Christopher “Unpezverde” Núñez (New York, NY) is a Visually Impaired choreographer based in NYC. Núñez is a Princeton University Arts Fellow 22’, a Jerome Hill Fellow 22’, a Dance/USA Fellow 22’, and a Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art Fellow 18’. His performances have been presented by The Joyce Theater, The Brooklyn Museum, The Kitchen, Danspace Project, Movement Research at The Judson Church, and the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, among others. His work has been featured in The New York Times, Art In America, The Brooklyn Rail, and The Dance Enthusiast. He’s been an Artist In Residence at Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), The Kitchen, Danspace Project, Abrons Arts Center, Movement Research, and Center for Performance Research. In 2023, Unpezverde was selected by the magazine Art In America as one of the New Talent artists and was nominated for a Bessie, The New York Dance and Performance Awards. In 2020, Núñez was invited by the NYC Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs to share his story as disabled and formally undocumented during Immigrant Heritage Week. He received his American Citizenship in 2023 but continues to be an advocate for the rights of undocumented disabled immigrants. unpezverde.com

Hélène Simoneau (Montreal, Québec / New York, NY) is a French-Canadian choreographer exploring themes of intimacy, agency, identity, sexuality, and power. Her choreography has been commissioned by Oregon Ballet Theatre, The Juilliard School, Charlotte Ballet, PARA.MAR Dance Theatre, Vitacca Ballet, Amy Seiwert’s Imagery, BalletX, the Ailey School, Dimensions Dance Theatre, and the American Dance Festival. She was recently a Choreography Fellow at New York City Center and received a 2021 Guggenheim Fellowship. She has also been a resident artist at Baryshnikov Arts Center, NYU/Tisch, NCCAkrón, and a fellow of The NYU Center for Ballet and the Arts, Ailey’s New Directions Choreography Lab, the Bogliasco Foundation, and the Swiss International Coaching Project for Choreographers (SiWiC) in Zurich. Simoneau was awarded first place for Choreography at the 13th Internationales Solo-Tanz-Theater Festival in Stuttgart, Germany, for her solo “the gentleness was in her hands.” hsdanse.org

Angelina Ramirez (Tucson, AZ) is a flamenco movement artist and teaching artist. Ramirez’s artistic work explores what it means to be a queer, latinx flamenca practicing in a traditional Roma/gitano form of dance. As a teaching artist, she is interested in the intersections of arts and healing, focusing on work with elders of all abilities and integrated flamenco for

neurodivergent participants. Ramirez is a 2022 Dance/USA Artist Fellow and a 2017 National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures fellow. In 2021, Ramirez received the Master-Apprentice Artist Award through the Southwest Folklife Alliance for her dedication to flamenco arts. In 2018, she received the Arizona Commission on the Arts Artist Research and Development Grant to support the development of her evening-length work /SER/. Ramirez is an original member of Yjastros, the American Flamenco Repertory Company, and has toured with world-renowned, New York-based company Noche Flamenca. Along with teaching and performing, Ramirez produces events and festivals throughout Arizona. arflamenco.com

J'Sun Howard (Chicago, IL) is a Chicago-based dancemaker and the recipient of several prestigious awards, including the National Endowment for the Arts, National Performance Network Creation Fund and Development Fund Awards, a 3Arts Award, and the inaugural City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events' Esteemed Artist Award. Additionally, he is recognized as an Asian Cultural Council Fellow. His works have been showcased at prominent venues such as Links Hall, Ruth Page Center for the Arts, Steppenwolf Theater Company, Defibrillator Performance Gallery, Patrick's Cabaret (Minneapolis, MN), Candy Box Festival (Minneapolis, MN), Danspace Project (NYC), Center for Performance Research (NYC), Detroit Dance City Festival (Detroit, MI), New Dance Festival (Daejeon, South Korea), where he won Best Dance Choreographer, and the World Dance Alliance's International Young Choreographers' Project (Kaohsiung, Taiwan). He has received commissions from Northwestern University, Columbia College Chicago, World Dance Alliance, and The Art Institute of Chicago. He holds an MFA in Dance and a graduate certificate in World Performance Studies from the University of Michigan.

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