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NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHOREOGRAPHY - AKRON ANNOUNCES THE FOURTH COHORT OF CREATIVE ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH PROGRAM



Edgar L. Page (photo by Susana Ortiz), The Era Footwork Crew (photo by Jamal Oliver), Takahiro Yamamoto (photo by James Arzente), Umi IMAN Siferllah-Griffin (photo by Awa Mally)

AKRON, Ohio (May 31, 2022)—**The National Center for Choreography - Akron (NCCAkron)** is excited to welcome the fourth cohort of the **Creative Administration Research (CAR)** program. Four new CAR Artist Teams include lead artists **Edgar L. Page** (Denver, CO), **Jamal Oliver and Brandon Calhoun** (Chicago, IL), **Takahiro Yamamoto** (Portland, OR), and **Umi IMAN Siferllah-Griffin** (Atlanta, GA).

The CAR program challenges artists within the dance ecosystem to think beyond the boundaries of known, traditional models and “best practices” in arts administration. With lead support from the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**, CAR is fostering a national think tank of Artist Teams, comprising dance artists, curated Thought Partners (thinkers from the arts field who work reciprocally to share knowledge), and NCCAkron team members. These four new Artist Teams will join fifteen others from across the United States for a total of nineteen active teams comprising the think tank. They applied through an open application process, and were chosen by a committee of current CAR Artists and Thought Partners.

Page, a Detroit native and former dancer, now serves as artistic director of his own multi-generational initiative called Feel the Movement, providing access to formal training and performance opportunities. Oliver and Calhoun represent The Era Footwork Crew, a dance collective centered on the street dance form of Chicago footwork. Based in the Pacific Northwest, Yamamoto creates multi-disciplinary performance work rooted in conceptual investigation. Siferllah-Griffin is a practitioner of Black vernacular and Native American dance.

“We were thrilled by our applicant pool, especially its geographic diversity,” says NCCAkron Executive/Artistic Director Christy Bolingbroke. “Often, there’s an assumption that dance only happens on the coasts. But we received 47 applications from artists in 19 states, including a significant number from the South. The varied interest showing up in the applicant pool also reinforced the hunger to do this work together in national community and conversation with others.”

The selected artists come from a range of backgrounds and ways of working. All share an interest in building intentional relationships and interrogating conventional models. “I’m hoping to gain a wider perspective of what’s possible in terms of arts management,” says Siferllah-Griffin, who is currently developing a new fellowship program to support Atlanta-based artists. “I am looking forward to learning and being in receptive mode.”

Oliver, who co-founded and co-directs The Era footwork crew in Chicago, is preparing to “upgrade, rebrand, and restart” with support from CAR. “Knowing that we have those resources with a strong foundation of support to help us on this new path makes it that much more exciting for ourselves as a growing, grassroots artist collective.”

All four Artist Teams will be paired with a Thought Partner — an artist, administrator, or other thinker, identified from NCCAkron’s national community and curated based on their background and skill sets. Thought Partners are identified through the CAR Work-in-Process: a series of small group discussions by nomination and invitation with arts administrators, artists, funders, and presenters to discuss current dance business models and the potential around the program. Since beginning the series in summer 2020, NCCAkron has brought together 57 thinkers and leaders across the arts sector. From the group of participants, NCCAkron curates a selection of potential Thought Partners for possible pairings for each Artist. Artists make their own final selections. Thought Partners for this cohort are **Antuan Byers** (New York, NY; working with Page); **Byron Au Yong** (Palm Springs, CA; working with Yamamoto); **Conrhonda E. Baker** (Elberton, GA; working with Siferllah-Griffin); and **Sarah Curran** (Chicago, IL; working with Calhoun and Oliver).

Over the next year, Artists and Thought Partners will engage in Investigative Retreats (intensive periods of exploration) to identify administrative experiments that support their artistic practices. This new cohort, along with all the current Artist Teams, will be welcomed to Akron during the inaugural [CAR Summit Convening](#) in June 2022.

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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 is made possible by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

About the Artists

Edgar L. Page (Denver, CO)

Edgar L. Page comes from legacies celebrating the African Diaspora and Black Modern Dance traditions. Originally from Detroit, MI he earned his BA in Dance from Western Michigan University as a Wade H. McCree, Jr. Incentive Scholar and Martin Luther King, Jr. Diversity Scholar. Upon graduation, Mr. Page spent a season with the Dayton Contemporary Dance Second Company before joining the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, touring domestically and internationally as a principal dancer. He established Edgar L. Page: Feel the Movement in 2018 as an intersectional, multigenerational arts initiative that centralizes storytelling through Africanist traditions. Mr. Page's career highlights include the 2021 Denver Mayor's Award for Excellence in Arts and Culture for Innovation, the 2020 Dance/USA DILT cohort, and a feature in the 2021 YouTube Originals program, "Black Renaissance: the Art and Soul of Our Stories." edgarlpage.com

Jamal Oliver | Litebulb and **Brandon K. Calhoun | Chief Manny** (Chicago, IL)

As members of The Era Footwork Crew, Jamal Oliver and Brandon Calhoun work as dancers, educators, filmmakers, and cultural organizers. The Era Footwork Crew are pioneers of the battle dance known as Chicago footwork. Since 2014, they have expanded upon what it means to be a dance crew, addressing inequality and racism through their lyrics and panel discussions and supporting women and girls in the history of footwork through collaboration and documentation. They have performed from Japan to Peru, performing and choreographing alongside leading artists such as Chance the Rapper, DJ Rashad, DJ Spinn, and Theaster Gates. Institutions like the Field Foundation, the University of Chicago, the Joyce Foundation, and NEFA (New England Foundation For The Arts) have recognized The Era with grants in support of the group's boundary-breaking artistic and social leadership. The Era's work has been in short documentaries by VICE, CBC (Canadian Broadcast Company), and the Chicago Tribune. www.theerafootworkcrew.com

Takahiro Yamamoto (Portland, OR)

Takahiro Yamamoto is a multidisciplinary artist and choreographer based in Portland, Oregon (Cowlitz, Clackamas and Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde). His current conceptual investigations revolve around the phenomenological effects of time, 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, 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 Institute for Contemporary Art, Diverseworks, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, The Henry Art Gallery, GoDown Arts Centre, Nairobi among other venues. Yamamoto holds an MFA in Visual Studies from Pacific Northwest College of Art. He co-directs the performance company *madhause* with Ben Evans, and is part of the Portland-based support group *Physical Education* with Allie Hankins, keyon gaskin, and Lu Yim. <https://takahiroyamamoto.com>

Umi IMAN Siferllah-Griffin (Atlanta, GA)

Umi IMAN (meaning faith/magnet) is an Emmy nominated dancer/movement artist based on Mvskoke Creek and Tsalagi lands Atl, GA. She is a walking manifestation of a Black American, Caribbean, and Tsalagi (Cherokee) bloodline and a practitioner of various Black vernacular and Native American dances. Her artistic practice is rooted in embracing dances (folklore and Vernacular) in her repertoire and aligning them with healing modalities as medicine for joy and liberation. IMAN nurtures and shares her artistry across many different spatial contexts. She's collaborated with many global communities and organizations such as Core Dance in ATL, I.M.A.N in Atlanta/Chicago, SpringBoard for the Arts in MN, Each One Teach ONE in Berlin, Volcano Arts Center in Hawaii, SE.S.TA in Prague, The Facing Race Conference, The Nobel Peace Prize Forum, and the MN Secretary of State's 50th Voter's Rights Act Celebration, and many more. She is also the co-creator and dancer of Al Taw'am, a multimodal dance ensemble composed of Khadijah Siferllah and herself. Her role in her communities is a healing facilitator and indigenous arts curator. Alongside Khadijah Siferllah she is the co-founder of Sequoia Ascension; Sequoia Ascension cultivates the wellbeing of Atlanta's Black American & Native American communities by way of movement and healing practices. They are developing a new residency/fellowship program to support Atlanta-based artists.

[instagram.com/umi_iman_movement/](https://www.instagram.com/umi_iman_movement/)

About the Thought Partners

Antuan Byers (New York, NY)

Antuan Byers is a dancer, creative entrepreneur, and arts activist based in New York. He is a graduate of the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program, and holds a certificate from the Parsons School of Design. Antuan has cultivated artistic partnerships with brands such as Acura, Barney's NY, Brooklinen, Nike, Jaguar, and Urban Outfitters, and global modeling campaigns including ASICS and Capezio. After touring internationally with Ailey II, he returned to Lincoln Center to rejoin the Metropolitan Opera Ballet, where he is currently performing a repertory with works choreographed by Kim Brandstrup, Lorin Latarro, Mark Morris, Alexei Ratmansky, Susan Stroman, and Christopher Wheeldon, among others. Antuan hosts The LLAB on the Pod de Deux podcast, a series on racial justice in the dance world, is a steering committee member of the Dance Artists' National Collective (DANC), and is a founding member of the Black Caucus at the American Guild of Music Artists. He is the proud Founder/CEO of Black Dance Change Makers.

Byron Au Yong (Palm Springs, CA)

Byron Au Yong creates across disciplines with an attention to intercultural collaboration and the places people call home. Projects include *Activist Songbook* to counteract hate and energize movements (Asian Arts Initiative, International Festival of Arts & Ideas) and *Stuck Elevator* about an immigrant trapped in an elevator for 81 hours (American Conservatory Theater). Honors include a Creative Capital Award and Sundance Institute Time Warner Foundation Fellowship. Au Yong is an associate professor at the University of San Francisco.

Conrhonda E. Baker (Elberton, GA)

Conrhonda's passion for the performing arts is 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 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.

Sarah Curran (Chicago, IL)

Sarah Curran is a Chicago-based consultant and curator with a socially-responsive, interdisciplinary practice. She is currently the interim director of UChicago Presents, where she served as the curator of experimental performance. Previously, Sarah was the Director of the Center for the Arts at Wesleyan University, and Managing Director of the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance. She has also worked with Stanford Arts Institute, the Tribeca Film Festival, Martha Graham Dance Company, the Chicago Humanities Festival, and North Lawndale College Prep Charter High School. Sarah holds an MA in Performance Studies from NYU, an AB from Princeton University, and a certificate in Curatorial Practice from Wesleyan University.