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**NCCAKRON LEVERAGES CARES ACT FUNDING FOR ARTISTS
TAJA WILL (MN) AND NICOLE KLAYMOON (CA)**



Left: Taja Will's *LÍNEAS de SANGRE* (photo Sequoia Hauck). Right: Nicole Klaymoon (photo Alexa Treviño, courtesy of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts).

AKRON, Ohio (June 14, 2022) — **The National Center for Choreography - Akron (NCCAkron)** announces two reimagined artist residencies, both made possible by National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) CARES Act funding. A \$50,000 award made possible by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act enabled NCCAkron to remotely support postponed residencies with choreographers **Taja Will** (Minneapolis, MN) and **Nicole Klaymoon** (San Francisco, CA).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, NCCAkron programming welcomed 100+ artists to Akron in person, annually. When travel became extra difficult, the Center collaborated with artists to develop a new Satellite Residency option that allowed them to safely work elsewhere, instead of navigating state lines and differing safety protocols from community to community.

In 2020, Congress appropriated \$75 million to the NEA through the CARES Act to preserve jobs and help support organizations suspending operations due to the early spread of COVID-19. NCCAkron was one of 855 organizations across the country to receive direct funding. Awarded

funds were restricted to projects that had already been put into motion and were directly affected by COVID-19. In this case, NCCAkron allocated these funds towards residencies with Will and Klaymoon, originally scheduled for spring 2020.

“Beyond using this government support as a stopgap or to simply make good on postponed activities, CARES Act funding via the NEA allowed us to reimagine and experiment with how else NCCAkron can work with artists,” said NCCAkron Executive/Artistic Director Christy Bolingbroke. “The lasting effects and uncertainty of COVID times informed the dreamstorming we did with Taja and Nicole around the conventional boundaries of time, place, and space.”

From spring 2021 through summer 2021, Will developed their feature-length film *LÍNEAS de SANGRE* during a Satellite Residency across multiple locations by developing a three-part way of working at different scales and phases. *LÍNEAS de SANGRE* follows Will’s works *Bruja // Fugitive Majesty* and *Blood Language*, all of which explore archetypes and ancestry.

“Retailoring my NCCAkron studio residency to satellite formations allowed me to not only pivot a live performance to dance film but also to have essential time at a residency center,” says Will. “The first residency NCCAkron supported took place in rural Connecticut with a longtime dance colleague and friend, who had also lost access to their studio practice during the pandemic winter. My second supported residency took place at Belwin Conservancy in rural Minnesota, Mni Sota Makoce, and was an immersion of bodies in conversations with land, plantita ancestors and our diaspora bloodlines.”

This summer, Klaymoon and her street dance theater company Embodiment Project will participate in a Satellite Residency in Honokaa, Hawaii in support of their work *The Grain of Tooth Inside of Sand (SAND)*. *SAND* is an original multi-disciplinary dance production that uses choreo-poetry, street dance, live song, interactive media, and documentary theater to tell a series of stories – unpacked through the body – to hold grief, aliveness, and healing through community movement building and site responsive performance. “I am grateful for the support to collaboratively reimagine what a residency can look like, in a way that centers and prioritizes the safety and wellbeing of all our artists,” says Klaymoon. “Having the space to revisit complex and heavy themes with care will be incredibly influential to the project.”

As on-site residencies resume, NCCAkron plans to integrate new thinking and concepts explored in the prototyping of Satellite Residencies, continually revisiting the idea of what it means to be “in residence” and developing reciprocal relationships.

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 National Endowment for the Arts

Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the Arts Endowment supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. Visit [arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov) to learn more.

Artist Biographies

Nicole Klaymoon (San Francisco, CA) initiated Embodiment Project (EP) in 2008, a performing arts organization that honors and expresses Black social dances/street dance, as well as other dance traditions, choreo poetry, documentary theater, live song, interactive video art. Her approach to dance-making emphasizes the ancestral and primordial power of dance as an act of resistance, collective healing, and social transformation within our Beloved Community. She has co-directed/co-created ten original evening-length productions since EP's inception including *Music of the Actualized Child* and The Isadora Duncan Dance Award-winning *Chalk Outlines* for all original music by Valerie Troutt. Klaymoon served on faculty in the dance department at the University of San Francisco and has worked as a dance educator in over 30 schools across the San Francisco Bay Area. www.embodimentproject.org

Taja Will (Minneapolis, MN) is a queer, Latinx (Chilean) adoptee, performer, choreographer, somatic therapist and Healing Justice practitioner based in Mni Sota Makoce, the ancestral lands of the Dakota and Anishinaabe. Taja's approach integrates improvisation, somatic modalities, text and vocals in contemporary performance; their work explores visceral connections to current socio-cultural realities through ritual, archetypes and everyday magic. They are a recipient of the Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship (2021) and the McKnight Choreography Fellowship (2018). Taja maintains a dynamic Healing Justice practice that includes consulting, workshops, mediation, somatic healing, nervous system triage, board development and organizational cultural competency, and coaching on unwinding from white body supremacy culture. They ground their work in indigenous solidarity and decolonization as a means to undo white body supremacy and its pervasive relationship to capitalism. Taja is committed to working for healing and liberation of Black, Indigenous and people of color. www.tajawillartist.com

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