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NCCAkron TEAM TRIPLES IN SIZE



Left to right: Erin Donohue, Michelle Sipes, Michelle Yard, and Christi Welter (all photos by Shane Wynn)

AKRON, Ohio (November 30, 2022) — After a nationwide search including 85 applicants, the **National Center for Choreography - Akron (NCCAkron)** announces four new hires: three **Program Managers Erin Donohue** (Phoenix, AZ), **Michelle Sipes** (Nashville, TN), and **Michelle Yard** (Brooklyn, NY); and **Marketing & Communications Manager Christi Welter** (Pittsburgh, PA).

Founded in 2015, NCCAkron supports research and development in dance by exploring the full potential of the creative process. In addition to offering resources to make new work, activities focus on catalyzing dialogue and experimentation; creating proximity among artists and dance thinkers; and aggregating resources around dance making. Each salaried Program Manager will focus on a portfolio of national dance artists organized by region while remaining rooted in their home cities. This employment evolution raises new questions and continues to inform NCCAkron's thinking around operating culture and what it means to be a national center based in Akron, OH.

“As we all continue to emerge and become, 2022 was a particularly transformative year for NCCAkron,” reflected **Executive/Artistic Director Christy Bolingbroke**. “Entering our eighth year of operation, I could not be more thrilled to have engaged these new colleagues, not only to fulfill our commitment to artists but also to imagine what we might do next.”

From 2015-2020, NCCAkron averaged 12-15 artist activities/year with a single full-time employee (Bolingbroke). The administrative staff team has grown as the programs and activities continue to expand. There are now 50 projected artist activities before the end of 2023.

The new team members will join Bolingbroke and **Business Operations Director Sarah Durham** working out of the primary office space in Akron.

New NCCAkron Team Member Bios

Erin Donohue (Phoenix, AZ) is an arts practitioner with a background in dance and performance. Erin has spent the past seven years working with MacArthur “genius” choreographer Liz Lerman, including producing her touring project *Wicked Bodies* and her retrospective at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Previously, Erin was the education director at Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa. She strives to build deep reciprocal relationships with artists and community. Working with and for other artists to achieve their vision is where she finds joy, and she believes wholeheartedly that every body can dance.

Michelle Sipes (Nashville, TN) is a choreographer-dancer, educator, and arts administrator with interests in cross-disciplinary collaborations, intimate storytelling, and the advancement of accessible resources for the arts. Michelle holds an MFA in Dance from the Ohio State University and a BFA in Dance from Belhaven University. From 2012-2017, Michelle performed and toured with Inlet Dance Theatre as a Company Member where she also taught and choreographed for Inlet’s education programs. Alongside her artistic practice, Michelle has also worked as a fundraiser, grant funder, and strategic planning consultant for independent artists, nonprofits, and government agencies nationally.

Michelle Yard (Brooklyn, NY) stands firmly on her Caribbean foundation. Ms. Yard was a member of the world-renowned Mark Morris Dance Group, where she enjoyed an illustrious twenty-year career performing critically acclaimed dance works. After leaving the company, she attended CUNY/Baruch College and received an MA in Arts Administration. She continues to dance professionally, performing with both Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group and Vanessa Walters. Yard, serves as company manager for The Blanket’s production of Lucinda Childs’ *DANCE*, and Pomegranate Arts projects, *The Plastic Bag Store*, and *Glass Etudes*.

Christi Welter (Pittsburgh, PA) received her BFA in Dance and BS in Mathematics from UC Santa Barbara. She was a company member of Peck Peck Dance Ensemble, CALI & CO dance, Linda Bair Dance Company, and TwoPoint4 Dance Theatre, as well as a guest artist with Joe Goode Performance Group, AXIS Dance Company, LEVYdance, and Catalyst. In addition to on-stage activities, Christi was the Lead House Manager at ODC Theater, a Lecturer at UC Davis, the Special Projects Manager at Attack Theatre, and a certified Pilates instructor. She is a recent graduate of the Master of Arts Management program at Carnegie Mellon University.

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.

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