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**THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHOREOGRAPHY–AKRON ANNOUNCES
DANCING LAB: MoBBALLET WRITING WORKSHOP
FOR EIGHT DANCE WRITERS & EDITORS**



L to R, top row: Amy Brandt (photo courtesy of artist); Joe Bowie (photo courtesy of artist); Theresa Ruth Howard (photo courtesy of artist); Hallie Chametzky (photo Grace Kathryn Landefeld); Benji Hart (photo by William Frederking). Lower row: song tucker (photo courtesy of artist); Caitlin Sims (photo by Jayme Thornton); Lauren Wingenroth (photo by Anna Carson DeWitt Photography); Rachel Benzing (photo by Lance Long)

Akron, OH (July 2, 2026) — The National Center for Choreography-Akron (NCCAkron), in partnership with **MoBBallet (Memoirs of Blacks in Ballet)**, announces the **Dancing Lab: MoBBallet Writing Workshop**. Created by MoBBallet founder Theresa Ruth Howard, this second iteration of the workshop continues the inquiry initiated through the inaugural MoBBallet Dance Writers Convening (Washington, D.C., 2024), expanding a critical dialogue around the role, responsibilities, and relevance of dance writing within a rapidly shifting cultural and artistic landscape. With NCCAkron, this iteration brings together writers, editors, and cultural thinkers to examine the evolving relationship between dance, criticism, storytelling, and the ways movement is documented, interpreted, and contextualized. Dancing Lab: MoBBallet Writing Workshop will take place in Akron, OH, July 13–17, 2026.

MoBBallet, founded by **Theresa Ruth Howard** (New York, NY), preserves, presents, and promotes the contributions and stories of Black artists in the field of Ballet. Howard has been a leading voice in advancing conversations around history, representation, equity, and the evolution of the art form. The following white [paper](#) developed from the inaugural MoBBallet Dance Writers Convening, provides additional context to the scope of the initiative.

”As we watch the world of dance evolve, expand, and as social norms shift, it is imperative that the hand guiding the pen possesses a lens capable of interpreting and contextualizing those changes, while also recognizing the role it plays within the greater ecosystem,” states Theresa Ruth Howard.

Participants selected for this Dancing Lab: MoBBallet Writing Workshop include dance journalists, writers, and editors **Rachel Benzing** (Chicago, IL), **Joe Bowie** (Evanston, IL), **Amy Brandt** (Hillsdale, NJ), **Hallie Chametzky** (Bronx NY), **Benji Hart** (Chicago, IL), **song tucker** (Philadelphia, PA), **Lauren Wingenroth** (Chapel Hill, NC), and **Caitlin Sims** (San Francisco, CA). Bios are below.

NCCAkron is one of only two national centers for choreography in the U.S., a research and development hub for dance. NCCAkron is currently celebrating 10 years of serving as a connector and cultural matchmaker for members of the dance ecosystem. NCCAkron Dancing Labs are residency environments that bring together two or more artists across geographical distances to be in dialogue. They are space for rigorous play and positive failure around an issue, idea, or field-wide trend. Artists share their working knowledge with each other and develop new ideas through body-based studio practice, personal introspection, and/or group reflection.

This Dancing Lab builds upon the work NCCAkron facilitated in its 2017 Dancing Lab: Low Residency Writing (co-designed with Tere O’Connor) and subsequent publications with the University of Akron Press (*Shifting Cultural Power* by Hope Mohr and *Artists on Creative Administrator*, edited by Tonya Lockyer).

Theresa Ruth Howard has been recognized by *The New York Times* as a “force for change,” bringing a multifaceted background as a ballet dancer, educator, journalist, and scholar to her work as an organizational consultant and advocate. Her holistic approach to addressing systemic inequities has driven international reforms across the dance field. In 2015, she founded MoBBallet (Memoirs of Blacks in Ballet), a digital archive and initiative preserving the contributions of Black ballet artists. A sought-after consultant, Howard has worked with leading institutions including The Royal Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, English National Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Seattle Opera, and others. As a curator, she has led panels, symposiums, and exhibitions worldwide, including Dutch National Ballet’s Positioning Ballet conferences, the Royal Ballet and Opera’s Exposure, Access, and Opportunity symposium, and the Kennedy Center’s Reframing the Narrative residency, which featured Donald Byrd’s *From Other Suns*, named a 2022 “standout” by *Pointe Magazine*. Her writing appears in major publications and

anthologies such as *Dance Magazine*, *Pointe*, *Tanz*, *Opera America*, and *The Source*, and former *New York Times* critic Alastair Macaulay has called her “one of the most valuable writers on dance today.

Dancing Lab: MoBBallet Writing Workshop Participants

Rachel Benzing (she/her) is a multidisciplinary dance artist, educator, choreographer, and writer based in the Chicagoland area. Her work spans concert dance, musical theatre, tap, jazz, and hip hop, with a focus on creating emotionally resonant experiences through movement, storytelling, and embodied expression. As a performer, Rachel has appeared with acclaimed Chicago-based artists and organizations, including the Chicago Human Rhythm Project's Rhythm World Festival with the reunion of the all-female tap ensemble Rhythm ISS (2018), M.A.D.D. Rhythms in *A Journey of the Dance Through Rhythm* (2019), and Tapman Productions' award-winning work *What It's Like to Be Human* (2019). Her choreographic and self-directed works, including *Love Me Or Leave Me* and *Memories In Motion*, have been presented at the Elgin Fringe Festival and Going Dutch Festival, where she explores the intersection of movement, text, sound, and visual elements. Rachel currently serves as Adjunct Faculty in the College of DuPage Dance Program, teaching jazz, tap, and hip hop while choreographing for departmental productions. She also choreographs for studios and competition teams nationwide, earning awards for choreography and creative concept. Additionally, Rachel writes professional dance criticism for SeeChicagoDance.com, offering thoughtful analysis of performance throughout the Chicago dance community.

Joe Bowie (he/him/his) was born in Lansing, Michigan, and started dancing as a sophomore at Brown University. After graduating, he moved to New York City, where he danced professionally for over twenty-five years. Bowie performed and toured nationally and internationally with the Paul Taylor Dance Company—the first African American male dancer in the company's history, from 1987 to 1989—and was a longtime member of the Mark Morris Dance Group from 1989 to 2011. Bowie earned his MFA in Dance with a Graduate Minor in Queer Studies from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 2024. His ongoing creative research explores embodied storytelling and highlights softness, tenderness, and gentleness among Black, queer moving bodies in dance spaces. He emphasizes improvisation to create movement that considers the “trace-making,” resonances, vibrations, and embodied stories we leave in spaces even briefly occupied. Bowie earned his A.B. with honors in English and American Literature, with an independent concentration in African American Poetry, from Brown University.

Amy Brandt, a native of Libertyville, Illinois, has been the editor in chief of *Pointe* since 2014. She danced professionally with the Milwaukee Ballet and The Suzanne Farrell Ballet, among others, performing a large repertoire that included 19th century classics and works by George Balanchine, Antony Tudor, Jerome Robbins and Alonzo King. She began regularly writing for Dance Media publications in 2009, including *Pointe*, *Dance Magazine*, and *Dance Teacher*. Amy graduated summa cum laude from Marymount Manhattan College with a BA in English and World Literatures in 2014, and she has served on the department's advisory board. She is also senior consulting editor for *Dance Teacher*.

Hallie Chametzky is a movement artist, writer, archivist, and organizer. Her work across fields is concerned with the politics of historiography, biography, and womanhood. Hallie's writings on dance have been published in *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Culturebot*, *In Dance*, *Contact Quarterly*, *Dance Magazine*, *First of the Month*, and The Library of Congress Performing Arts Reading Room Blog. Her dance theater works have been presented by University Settlement, Arts on Site, The Craft, Spoke the Hub, and others. Hallie was a 2024 Moulin/Belle Resident Artist, 2023 MOtiVE Resident Artist, and 2021-22 University Settlement Performance Project Fellow. As a performer, she has worked with Annie-B Parson and Paul Lazar, Yehuda Hyman/Mystical Feet Company, Bluebird Theatre Company, and Stephanie Saywell, and performed works by Merce Cunningham, Liz Lerman, Richard Foreman, and Helen Simoneau. Hallie organizes with Dancers for Palestine and Jews for Racial and Economic Justice. She is pursuing an MFA in Dance from Hunter College. www.halliechametzky.com

Benji Hart is an interdisciplinary artist, author, and educator. Their words have appeared in numerous anthologies, including *No Cop City, No Cop World* (Haymarket Books, 2025), *Constellations of Care* (Pluto Press, 2024), *And the Category Is...* (Beacon Press, 2022), and the second edition of *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves* (Oxford University Press, 2022). Their essays have been published in *Hammer & Hope*, *Time*, *Teen Vogue*, *The Funambulist*, and elsewhere. They have been interviewed in *Public Books*, *Sixty Inches From Center*, *Lambda Literary*, and on the *Love in a F*cked Up World* podcast, and been a guest presenter at the American Repertory Theater, the Race & Performance Lab at the University of Virginia, the Barnard Center for Research on Women, and the National Museum of African American History & Culture. Their performances have been featured at the Seattle Art Museum, OUTsider Fest, the Poetry Foundation, and the Dance/USA National Conference. They have received support from the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Yaddo, MacDowell, and were named one of 2026's "Writers to Watch" by the *Guild Literary Complex*. They were born and raised in Massachusetts, and live and work in Chicago.

Lauren Wingenroth is a Chapel Hill, NC-based journalist covering dance, theater, sports, and more. Her writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Dance Magazine*, *Playbill*, *American Theatre*, *ESPN*, *SELF*, *GQ*, *Runner's World*, *Outside*, and others. She is a former editor of *Dance Magazine* and *Dance Teacher Magazine*.

Caitlin Sims is editor in chief of *Dance Magazine* and content director of Dance Media. An editor and writer for more than two decades, she has written and photographed for *Dance Magazine*, and her writing has appeared in *Pointe Magazine*, *Dance Teacher*, *Dance Spirit*, *The New York Times*, *Newsday*, and *Playbill*. After graduating from Stanford with a BA in political science and economics, she was news editor at *Dance Magazine*, before becoming editorial director of *Dance Teacher* and *Dance Spirit* and part of the team that worked with editor Virginia Johnson to launch *Pointe* magazine. She spent 6 years overseeing content and editorial for San Francisco Ballet as well as managing its social media accounts. She studied ballet with Beatrice Collenette and at Ballet Pacifica in California.

song aziza tucker (she/her) is a project based movement and writing artist whose works have spiraled out of her love for Black femmes, music, and poetry. song is wrapped up in the erotic, cathartic, and beautiful reflections of black femme aliveness and survivalhood. She obtained both her BFA and MFA degrees respectively at the University of the Arts under the direction of Donna Faye Burchfield. Alongside her research, song has had the pleasure of working as a performer and collaborator with Mark Caserta, Tommie-Waheed Evans, Shayla-Vie Jenkins, Ogemdi Ude, jaamil olawale kosoko, Jordan Lloyd, Niall Jones, Doug Varone, Jesse Zaritt, and Abby Zbikowski among others. Through all collaboration, song desires and commands a full pronouncement of a voluminous self impelled by black femme strategies in research and lived practice.

About NCCAkron

For ten years, the National Center for Choreography–Akron (NCCAkron) has been a leader in dance research and development and a connector for artists. As one of only two choreography centers in the U.S., NCCAkron is an incubator and hub for dance. We also offer audiences opportunities to experiment with and understand dance through conversations, events, podcasts, and books. Over the past decade, NCCAkron has supported 800+ dance artists across 100 U.S. cities, serving as a cultural matchmaker for choreographers and a hyperagent for the national dance field. Offering space and resources for rigorous play and positive failure, NCCAkron has redefined what it means to support dance artists. For more information, visit nccakron.org.

A discrete nonprofit organization, separate from The University of Akron but with offices based there, the establishment and general operation of NCCAkron are made possible by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

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