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**THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHOREOGRAPHY - AKRON  
RECEIVES \$25,000 GRANT  
FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS**



Photo credit (L to R): Ashwini Ramaswamy (Ed Bock); Pioneer Winter Collective (World Red Eye).

AKRON, Ohio (June 24, 2021)—**The National Center for Choreography - Akron (NCCAkron)** announces today that the organization has received a \$25,000 Grants for Arts Projects award from the National Endowment for the Arts to support 2021-22 programming. NCCAkron is among more than 1,100 projects across America selected for this round of funding, totaling nearly \$27 million. This funding will support an NCCAkron Creative Research Residency, Technical Residency, and the Creative Administration Research program. The NEA support finds NCCAkron in good company with the City of Akron, as the Heinz Poll Summer Dance Festival also received NEA funding. This is the 5th time NCCAkron has received prestigious NEA funding since its founding in 2015.

“Dance artists are equal partners in designing NCCAkron’s programming,” said **NCCAkron’s Executive/Artistic Director Christy Bolingbroke**. “These national funding opportunities arise from conversations with artists that happen over the course of 15-18 months. Operating from a place of abundance, NCCAkron meets artists where they are at in order to dream and realize resources. Working with national and regional dance artists solidifies Akron as a hub for arts innovation and support. Funding from the NEA is a vote of confidence for these artists and our role in the broader arts ecosystem.”

“As the country and the arts sector begin to imagine returning to a post-pandemic world, the National Endowment for the Arts is proud to announce funding that will help arts organizations

such as NCCAkron reengage fully with partners and audiences,” said NEA Acting Chairman Ann Eilers. “Although the arts have sustained many during the pandemic, the chance to gather with one another and share arts experiences is its own necessity and pleasure.”

Programs highlighted in NCCAkron’s application and receiving support through this NEA award include:

- Creative Research Residency: Beyond Bharatanatyam with Ashwini Ramaswamy (Minneapolis, MN)
- Technical Residency: *Birds of Paradise* with Pioneer Winter (Miami, FL)
- 15 artists in the Creative Administration Research program

**Ashwini Ramaswamy** (Minneapolis, MN) will use the creative research residency to translate Bharatanatyam (a classical Indian dance form) principles on other dance forms and styles. Ramaswamy will explore beyond her most recent work where she collaborated with Gaga (the movement language and pedagogy) and Black diasporic dance artists to reimagine Bharatanatyam and its contemporary manifestations. Now, Ramaswamy is interested in further experimentation with how she might relate her choreographic practices to contemporary dance/reperatory companies and The University of Akron dance student training.

In December 2021, **Pioneer Winter** (Miami, FL) will visit NCCAkron to play with alternative presenting spaces and formats for his work *Birds of Paradise*. The work continues Winter’s exploration of beauty and virtuosity outside the mainstream by creating a series of dance-based queer solo portraits on the themes of agency, survival, and transformation. Featuring interwoven filmed and live dance performance, this new work is developed in collaboration with the performers, the White Elephant Group media company, and sound artist Juraj Kojš. Upcoming in August, Pioneer will engage in a Dancing Conversation event alongside Akron community members as part of NCCAkron’s partnership with The University of Akron’s ZTV.

“The resources given to me have gone beyond the financial support. Collaborating with NCCAkron on the tech residency has brought new ideas to the surface,” explains Winter. “NCCAkron has leveraged their partnership with The University of Akron to explore how I might present a version of this work in the Cummings Center for the History of Psychology gallery spaces.”

The Creative Administration Research program challenges and invites U.S. choreographers to re-examine artistic and administrative practices to experiment beyond “best practices.” Over the past year NCCAkron has worked with 10 Artist Teams to reimagine new ways forward for the dance field. Each Artist Team consists of an Artist and a Thought Partner. Current artists include **Abby Zbikowski** (Columbus, OH), **Banning Boulding** (Nashville, TN), **Bebe Miller** (Columbus, OH), **Brian Brooks** (New York, NY), **Dominic Moore-Dunson** (Akron, OH), **Iquail Shaheed** (Philadelphia, PA), **Jaamil Olawale Kosoko** (New York, NY), **jumatatu m. poe** (Philadelphia, PA), **Kate Wallich** (Seattle, WA), **Marjani Forté-Saunders** (Pasadena, CA), **Pioneer Winter** (Miami, FL), **Raja Feather Kelly** (New York, NY), **Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener** (New York, NY), **Rosie Herrera** (Miami, FL), and **Ronald K. Brown** (New York, NY).

For more information on the projects included in the Arts Endowment grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](https://arts.gov/news).



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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](https://nccakron.org).

The establishment and general operation of NCCAkron is made possible by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

### **About the NEA**

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.

### **Artist Biographies**

#### **Abby Zbikowski** (Champaign-Urbana, IL)

Abby Zbikowski founded her company Abby Z and the New Utility in 2012, which has performed nationally at Jacob's Pillow and the Fuse Box Festival, among others. Zbikowski is a 2020 United States Artists Fellow, a 2017 Juried Bessie Award recipient, and was awarded a "Choreographer of the Future" commission from Dance Umbrella UK in 2018. She is an inaugural Caroline Hearst Choreographer-In-Residence at the Lewis Center of the Arts at Princeton University (2017-19) and is currently artist in residence at New York Live Arts (2018-20). She is an assistant professor of Dance at the University of Illinois and on faculty at American Dance Festival. Zbikowski holds a BFA in dance from Temple University and an MFA from The Ohio State University. [abbyznewutility.org](https://abbyznewutility.org)

**Ashwini Ramaswamy** (Minneapolis, MN)

As a founding member of Ragamala Dance Company, Ramaswamy has toured extensively, performing throughout the U.S. and in Russia, Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan, the U.K, and India. As a soloist, she has performed at the Just Festival (Edinburgh, U.K.), the Ritz Theater (Minneapolis, MN), the Drive East Festival, and Erasing Borders Festival (New York, NY). Her choreographic work has been presented by Augsburg College, the Red Eye Theater, and the Cowles Center (Minneapolis, MN); Triskelion Arts, The Joyce Theater (New York, NY), The Just Festival (Edinburgh, U.K), and The Yard (Martha's Vineyard). Ashwini's projects have been commissioned by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra's Liquid Music Series, The American Dance Platform, the Great Northern Festival, and The Cowles Center. Her choreography has been listed among the 'Best of the Year' in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *Minnpost*, *City Pages*, and *Big Dance Town*. As a 2019 *City Pages* 'Artist of the Year,' Ashwini's work was highlighted for 'illuminating Bharatanatyam's future.' [ashwiniramaswamy.com](http://ashwiniramaswamy.com)

**Banning Bouldin** (Nashville, TN)

Banning Bouldin is an educator, choreographer, and the founding artistic director of New Dialect contemporary dance collective, based in Nashville, Tennessee. She received her BFA from The Juilliard School in 2002, and spent the first decade of her career performing internationally with renowned companies and choreographers, such as The Cullberg Ballet of Sweden and Aszure Barton and Artists. An awarded choreographer, Banning's works have been commissioned by companies, universities, and presenters across the US, including Jacob's Pillow, Gibney Company, the Juilliard School, and OZ Arts Nashville. Her company New Dialect, now in its 7th season, acts as a hub for contemporary dancers, teaching artists, and choreographers to connect and explore the wide variety of movement languages that exist in 21st Century dance. [newdialect.org](http://newdialect.org)

**Bebe Miller** (Columbus, OH)

Bebe Miller, an American choreographer, dancer and director, first performed her work at NYC's Dance Theater Workshop in 1978. Interested in "finding a physical language for the human condition," she formed Bebe Miller Company in 1985. The Company has performed extensively in the UK, Europe, Africa and throughout the US. Miller's choreography, noted for its mix of virtuosic, athletic speed and fragile humanity, has been commissioned by Oregon Ballet Theatre, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Boston Ballet, Philadanco, the UK's Phoenix Dance Company and PACT Dance Company of Johannesburg, South Africa. She was named a Master of African American Choreography by the Kennedy Center, has received four "Bessie" awards, United States Artists and Guggenheim Fellowships, honorary doctorates from Ursinus College and Franklin & Marshall College, and is one of the inaugural class of Doris Duke Artist Award recipients. [bebemillercompany.org](http://bebemillercompany.org)

**Brian Brooks** (New York, NY)

Choreographer Brian Brooks, a Guggenheim Fellow, recently completed a Mellon Foundation Creative Artist Fellowship at the University of Washington, researching the intersection of performance and augmented reality technologies. From 2016-2019 he was the appointed Choreographer in Residence at Chicago's Harris Theater for Music and Dance, creating dances for Hubbard Street, Miami City Ballet, and others. Based in New York City, his dance group, the Moving Company, has toured internationally since 2002 with presentations by BAM's Next Wave Festival, the Joyce Theater, Jacob's Pillow, the American Dance Festival, NY City Center Fall for Dance Festival, among others. Brooks has collaborated with NYC Ballet Associate Artistic Director and former Principal Dancer Wendy Whelan since 2012, as well as choreographing multiple off-Broadway Theater productions with Theatre for a New Audience. He has served as part-time faculty at both Rutgers University and Princeton University, and was a Teaching Artist at the Lincoln Center Institute from 1999 to 2012. [brianbrooksmovingcompany.com](http://brianbrooksmovingcompany.com)

**Dominic Moore-Dunson** (Akron, OH)

A 2019 Cleveland Arts Prize Recipient, choreographer Dominic Moore-Dunson has been recognized as an emerging artist and arts leader. His recognitions and fellowships include MOCA Cleveland's "New Agent" award, Jacob's Pillow Ann & Weston Hicks Choreography Fellowship, the Devil Strip Magazine's 2018 Breakout Artist, National Arts Strategies (NAS) Creative Community Fellowship, and others. Dominic is an inaugural member of Leadership Akron's Diversity on Board Program and recently completed the National Arts Strategies Executive Program in Arts & Culture Strategies's certificate program. His large-scale community-based dance theatre project called *The 'Black Card' Project* premiered in September 2018 and is currently in its second iteration. Moore-Dunson currently serves on the board of ArtsNow and the Akron Cultural Plan Steering Committee. [instagram.com/dmooredun](https://www.instagram.com/dmooredun)

**Iquail Shaheed** (Philadelphia, PA)

Iquail Shaheed is the founder and executive artistic director of DANCE IQUAIL!. A native of Philadelphia, Iquail trained at the Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts and Philadelphia Dance Company's (PHILADANCO) "Training & Instruction" program. While at PHILADANCO, he became a senior member of Danco II, under the tutelage of Donald T. Lunsford II. Shaheed founded DANCE IQUAIL! to create dance projects that tell stories not frequently heard in the performing arts, and to engage directly with audiences drawn from Mantua, the West Philadelphia neighborhood where he grew up. His work has been recognized with Lower Manhattan Cultural Council grant awards, The Caroline H. Newhouse Award, The Philadelphia Dance Award (Rocky), The Marion D. Cuyjet Award, and the NAACP ACT-SO National Silver Medal among others. [danceiquail.org](http://danceiquail.org)

**Jaamil Olawale Kosoko** (New York, NY)

Jaamil Olawale Kosoko is a Bessie Award-nominated, Nigerian American performance artist, poet, curator, community organizer, and educator. His performance work has been presented throughout the US and Europe, and his poems, interviews, and essays have appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Dunes Review*, *Dance Journal*, and *Critical Correspondence*, among other publications. Kosoko has received a series of fellowships, grants, and awards—including

a 2020 Pew Fellowship, 2019 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship in Choreography, 2019 NPN Development Fund Award, 2019 Movement Research Artist in Residence, 2018-20 Live Feed Artist at New York Live Arts, 2017-19 Princeton Arts Fellow, Red Bull Writing Fellow, 2017 MAP Fund recipient, and Cave Canem Poetry Fellow—and he continues to guest teach, speak, and lecture internationally. Currently, he is the Alma Hawkins Visiting Professor at UCLA (Los Angeles, CA). [jaamil.com](http://jaamil.com)

**jumatatu m. poe** (Philadelphia, PA)

jumatatu poe grew up dancing in the living room and at parties with his siblings and cousins. His “formal” training includes international traditional and contemporary dance techniques, with a personal focus on joy, physical health, and Black aesthetics. poe uses performance, media, and environmental location to create performance work that destabilizes notions of identity, especially Black queer identity. He remains interested in examining the space—or creating the space—within Black art forms for queer Black futures. Through the fabulation of alternate, or unreal, narratives of history and imagined futures, poe creates nuance, subtlety, and happiness in relationship to Black narratives frequently rooted in realities of extreme loss, invisibility or hyper-visibility, and erasure. [jumatatu.org](http://jumatatu.org)

**Kate Wallich** (Seattle, WA)

Kate Wallich is a choreographer, director and educator – named one of *Dance Magazine’s* “25 to Watch”. She has left a significant mark in the Pacific Northwest with commissions and presentations from institutions including On the Boards, Velocity Dance Center, and Seattle Art Museum; nationally at Walker Art Center with Liquid Music, The Joyce Theater, Jacob’s Pillow Inside/Out; internationally at Springboard Danse and SPOTLIGHT: USA in Bulgaria. In 2010 she co-founded her company The YC with Lavinia Vago and has gone on to create five evening-length works and three large scale site-specific works. In 2010 she founded Dance Church®, an all-abilities, community-focused class that is taught in cities worldwide.

[Katewallich.com](http://Katewallich.com)

**Marjani Forté-Saunders** (Pasadena, CA)

Marjani Forté-Saunders is a choreographer, performer, and community organizer. Her practice is informed by years in anti-racist organizer training and as a lead facilitator with Urban Bush Women’s (UBW) Builders, Organizers and Leaders through Dance. She is a 2020 recipient of the Foundation of Contemporary Arts Grants for Artists Award and an inaugural fellow of the UBW Choreographic Center, the Jerome Artist Fellowship, and the DanceUSA Fellowship. Forté-Saunders collaborates with husband and composer Everett Asis Saunders as 7NMS|. They are founding directors of the platform ART & POWER, dedicated to Black Purpose and Innovation. Their latest work *PROPHET* is being incubated through Art & Power’s #SatelliteResidencies (in response to COVID-19) and in partnership with co-commissioners Abrons Arts Center, Kelly Strayhorn Theatre, and the BAM Inaugural Artist Residency Series.

[7nms.com](http://7nms.com)



**Pioneer Winter** (Miami, FL)

Pioneer Winter is a Miami-based choreographer and artistic director of Pioneer Winter Collective, a dance-theater company rooted in social practice and community, queer visibility and beauty beyond the mainstream. Recognized in *Dance Magazine's* 25 to Watch, Pioneer Winter works to democratize performance in public spaces, museums and galleries, stage, and film. Pioneer has been commissioned by the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, Miami Theater Center, Karen Peterson and Dancers, Tigertail Productions, Jacksonville Dance Theatre, and FundArte. Pioneer Winter's work is supported by local, state, and foundation grants and fellowships. Pioneer is the Arsht Center's first Artist-in-Residence collaboration in a decade. Pioneer earned an MPH Public Health and Epidemiology from Florida International University's Stempel College of Public Health (2009) and MFA Choreography from Jacksonville University/White Oak (2016). An extension of his creative practice, Pioneer has curated and directed ScreenDance Miami Festival since 2017, presented first by Tigertail Productions and now by Miami Light Project; Pioneer's own films screen internationally. Pioneer serves as Assistant Teaching Professor in the Honors College and College of Communication, Architecture + The Arts at Florida International University. [pioneerwinter.com](http://pioneerwinter.com)

**Raja Feather Kelly** (Brooklyn, NY)

Choreographer/Director Raja Feather Kelly is the founder and artistic director of the dance-theatre-media company the feath3r theory. He was born in Fort Hood, Texas and holds a B.A. in Dance and English from Connecticut College. He is a three-time Princess Grace Award winner (2017, 2018, 2019). Over the past decade he has created fifteen evening-length works for the feath3r theory, choreographed extensively for Off-Broadway theatre, and performed with Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group, David Dorfman Dance, Kyle Abraham | A.I.M, and zoe | juniper. [thefeath3rtheory.com](http://thefeath3rtheory.com)

**Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener** (New York, NY)

Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener are New York-based dance artists. Their ongoing work involves the building of collaborative worlds through improvisational techniques, digital technologies, and material construction. Together they have been artists-in-residence at LMCC, Mt Tremper, pieter, Jacob's Pillow, New York City Center, The Watermill Center, MANCC, Headlands Center for the Arts, BOFFO, Center for Ballet and the Arts, and Baryshnikov Arts Center. Their work has been commissioned by Danspace Project, Madison Square Park, The Joyce Theater, BAM/Next Wave, The Barbican, EMPAC, The Walker Art Center, MCA Chicago, The Wexner, On The Boards, The LAB, Marfa Sounding, SFMOMA and MoMA PS1. [rashaunsilasdance.com](http://rashaunsilasdance.com)

**Ronald K. Brown** (New York, NY)

Ronald K. Brown founded Evidence, A Dance Company in 1985. He has worked with Mary Anthony Dance Theater, Jennifer Muller/The Works and other choreographers and artists. Brown has set works on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Jeune Ballet d'Afrique Noire, Philadanco, Ballet Hispanico, and Malpaso. He won an AUDELCO Award for his choreography in Regina Taylor's award-winning play Crowns, received two Black Theater Alliance Awards, and a Fred & Adele Astaire Award for Outstanding Choreography in the Tony Award winning Broadway and national touring production of The

Gershwin's Porgy & Bess. Brown was named Def Dance Jam Workshop 2000 Mentor of the Year and has received Scripps/ADF Award, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts Choreographers Fellowship, United States Artists Fellowship, Jacob's Pillow Dance Award, and The Ailey Apex Award. Brown is a member of Stage Directors & Choreographers Society and Co-Director of Restoration ART /Youth Arts Academy Pre-Professional Training Program. [evidencedance.com](http://evidencedance.com)

**Rosie Herrera** (Miami, FL)

Rosie Herrera is a Cuban-American dancer, choreographer and artistic director of Rosie Herrera Dance Theater in Miami. She is a graduate from New World School with a BFA in Dance Performance. She has been commissioned by The Miami Light Project, The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, Ballet Hispanico, Jose Limon Dance Company, Moving Ground Dance Theater, Houston Met Dance, New World Symphony and the American Dance Festival (ADF) in 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 and 2018. Her company, Rosie Herrera Dance Theatre, has been presented by the Northrop Dance Series, New World Symphony, Baryshnicov Arts Center, Texas A & M University, Duncan Theater, The Annenburg Center, Maui Arts and Cultural Center, Dance Place, Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans, The Yard at Marthas Vineyard, The Rialto Center, Gotham Dance at Skirball and Focus Dance at The Joyce as well as by The American Dance Festival at the Joyce NYC in 2016 and 2018. [rosieherrera.dance](http://rosieherrera.dance)