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NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHOREOGRAPHY-AKRON ANNOUNCES UPCOMING SLATE OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES FALL 2021-SPRING 2022



From left to right: Hope Mohr (courtesy the artist); Taja Will (Nanne Sorvold); Ben Needham-Wood (Maximillian Tortoriello Photography); Dominic Moore-Dunson (courtesy the artist); Pioneer Winter (Mitchell Zachs).

September 14, 201 (Akron, OH) -- **The National Center for Choreography - Akron (NCCAkron)** is proud to announce its upcoming season of public programming, fall 2021 through spring 2022. This robust slate of live and virtual programs includes the release of NCCAkron's first book, the second season of the *Inside the Dancer's Studio* podcast, live events exploring key topics in choreography and contemporary culture, and a national summit convening on administrative practice. These programs are developed in partnership with the local Northeast Ohio community, including NCCAkron founding partners The University of Akron and DANCECleveland, and offer learning opportunities for local artists, students, and the Akron community.

“Coming out of NCCAkron’s 5th anniversary, our 2021-2022 season continues to demonstrate a commitment to national programming with local relevance,” said NCCAkron Executive/Artistic Director **Christy Bolingbroke**. “We’re excited to continue highlighting fertile, creative ground in Akron while advocating that dance is a central part of culture in this country.”

NCCAkron's First Book Launches

NCCAkron is partnering with **The University of Akron Press** to publish the **NCCAkron Series in Dance**. Books in the series will focus on individuals, regions, and genres of dance that have traditionally been overlooked. **Dr. Jon Miller**, Director of The University of Akron Press, says: "This series partnership allows us to share stories that would otherwise not be told. The Press is excited to expand its footprint into a new genre, to the benefit of our local and national readership."

The first book in the series, ***Shifting Cultural Power: Case Studies and Questions in Performance*** by choreographer **Hope Mohr** (San Francisco, CA), is available now. The book, released September 1, 2021 reflects on Mohr's ten years at the helm of The Bridge Project and covers a range of equity-related subjects including transitioning a hierarchical nonprofit to a model of distributed leadership; expanding the canon; having difficult conversations about the racial inequities that continue to pervade the performing arts field; and reckoning with aesthetic bias in dance.

Mohr and artist **Taja Will** (Minneapolis, MN) will co-facilitate a *Shifting Cultural Power* study group for white dance educators this fall. The study group comprises educators from across the country who will work in coalition to interrogate the book and the questions it raises for practice and pedagogy. As Mohr writes in *Shifting Cultural Power*, "for cultural shift to happen, white people need to talk to other white people about giving up power. For too long, people of color have been called upon to do this educational and emotional work." This study group will serve as a pilot program, as NCCAkron plans future meaningful opportunities for educators, artists, and the community at large to engage with books in this series. The pilot is funded by a microgrant from GAR Foundation.

Dancing Conversations Continue

Dancing Conversations are events that locate dance among broader topics and offer an opportunity to demonstrate the aesthetic range within the dance field. Past topics covered include collaboration between dancers and musicians, gender and magic in creative practice, experiences of Black male choreographers, and queer movements. NCCAkron collaborates with The University of Akron's student-run television station ZTV to record Dancing Conversations and make them available to the public for free through NCCAkron's [YouTube channel](#).

On September 16, NCCAkron Executive/Artistic Director **Christy Bolingbroke** will speak with choreographer **Monica Bill Barnes** (New York, NY) and creative producing director / performer **Robbie Saenz de Viteri** (Brooklyn, NY) on the use of creative nonfiction storytelling and humor in her work. This Dancing Conversation will happen in

conjunction with Barnes' educational residency co-sponsored by The University of Akron School of Dance, Theatre & Arts Administration and DANCECleveland in advance of her September 25 performance of *The Running Show*, presented by DANCECleveland at The University of Akron's E.J. Thomas Hall (visit dancecleveland.org for tickets).

On October 21, Hope Mohr and **Cristina González Alcalá** (Akron, OH), Community Investment Officer at the **Akron Community Foundation**, will participate in a Dancing Conversation around the themes of *Shifting Cultural Power*. The event will be NCCAkron's first in person event in over a year located at The Nightlight in downtown Akron at 6 pm ET. As a co-sponsor for the event, **ArtsNow Executive Director Nicole Mullet** commented, "This book and its subject is so timely with the implementation of Akron's first ever Cultural Plan. The cultural plan is intended to examine and strengthen the soul of a community through the exploration of arts, humanities, culture, natural resources, and heritage throughout all neighborhoods of Akron."

On December 16, Dancing Conversation: South Asian Experimental Dance Artists will feature choreographer **Lionel Popkin** (Los Angeles, CA) and other diasporic dance artists of South Asian descent exploring tradition, experimentation, and cultural understanding. Additional details to be announced.

Season 2 of NCCAkron's Inside the Dancer's Studio Podcast

The second season of NCCAkron's podcast, ***Inside the Dancer's Studio***, will be released weekly between September 10 and November 12. Through interviews with choreographers from across the United States — some recorded live on The University of Akron's campus — *Inside the Dancer's Studio* explores dance-making through engaging, fun, and deeply human conversation. Podcast guests for Season 2 include **Raja Feather Kelly** (New York, NY), **Amy Miller** (New York, NY), **Abby Zbikowski** (Champaign-Urbana, IL), **Brian Brooks** (New York, NY), **Nicole Klaymoon** (San Francisco, CA), **James Graham** (San Francisco, CA), **Kayla Farrish** (New York, NY); **Guillaume Gabriel** (France), and **Paula Mann** (Minneapolis, MN).

Inside the Dancer's Studio is funded in part by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. All episodes are available for free on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and nccakron.org/podcast.

NCCAkron's Ideas in Motion Continues

Ben Needham-Wood (San Francisco, CA) will visit NCCAkron and The University of Akron from October 9-22 to work within the campus community as the second annual **Community Commissioning Residency Artist**. The Community Commissioning

Residency program is the annual fall phase of an initiative called **Ideas in Motion**. Artists were identified and invited to apply through a nomination process by The University of Akron faculty and NCCAkron team members. NCCAkron team members, faculty, and students served on the selection committee, who ultimately chose Needham-Wood based, in part, for his proposed focus on mental health in his choreographic research. Needham-Wood will guest teach UA classes, meet with members of the greater Akron community, and develop work in the dance studio over a two-week period.

The spring phase of Ideas in Motion will continue in 2022 with the return of **21st Century Dance Practices**, a capsule series of classes guest-taught by today's working artists for UA students. This series goes beyond the standard dance masterclass by representing genres, geographies, cultural and social contexts outside of the traditional binary of modern and ballet in a conservatory setting. Assistant Lecturer of Dance **Christine Howe** remarks: "This connection to different artists making their own careers in dance is crucial to students' understanding of what dance can be and what is possible with a degree from The University of Akron."

Additionally, NCCAkron will host another slate of live *Inside the Dancer's Studio* lunchtime interviews with these visiting artists. These interviews will be recorded and released as a future season of the *Inside the Dancer's Studio* podcast; the in-person events will be free and open to the public.

Ideas in Motion is a joint initiative of NCCAkron, The University of Akron, The University of Akron Foundation, and the Mary Schiller Myers Lecture Series in the Arts.

Creative Residency with Dominic Moore-Dunson

Choreographer **Dominic Moore-Dunson** (Akron, OH) is currently in Creative Residency at NCCAkron to continue development of *inCOPnegro*, a dance theater and podcast exploring the concepts of "safety" and the relationship between law enforcement and black communities in Northeast Ohio. Moore-Dunson has been coordinating one-on-one meetings with community stakeholders, Black police officers, and Black criminal justice workers to understand the themes and dynamics in these untold stories. In December, Moore-Dunson will invite the public to a work in progress showing at NCCAkron's studio to provide feedback on the music, choreography, and spoken word. This event will be free and open to the public; details to be announced.

Dan Rice, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, says: "Dominic Moore-Dunson's ground-breaking *inCOPnegro* project does an exceptional job of unpacking the complex intersection between racial injustice and law

enforcement. This is a long-overdue due project and a must see for all members of our community.”

Phase 1 of Moore-Dunson’s Creative Residency at NCCAkron is supported by the Akron Civic Commons and Akron Community Foundation. The development of *inCOPnegro* is also supported by a residency at Akron Soul Train.

Technical Residency with Pioneer Winter Collective

Choreographer **Pioneer Winter** (Miami, FL) will be in a Technical Residency at NCCAkron to evolve his work *Birds of Paradise*, a series of dance-based queer solo portraits on themes of agency, survival, and transformation. Winter will focus on translating the performance version of *Birds of Paradise* into gallery spaces, with investigations at the Cummings Center for the History of Psychology and the Emily Davis Gallery at the Myers School of Art. Related events at both of these spaces will be free and open to the public; further information is forthcoming.

Winter joined **Tony Pankuch** from the Cummings Center, **Arnie Tunstall** from the Emily Davis Gallery, and **LaTonda Mobley** from Akron Pride Festival earlier this year for a Dancing Conversation on queer movements. That Dancing Conversation is available now for free through NCCAkron’s YouTube channel.

This Technical Residency is funded by the New England Foundation for the Arts’ National Dance Project, with funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Grant Writing Internship for Students at The University of Akron

For the fifth year in a row, NCCAkron will pair students at The University of Akron with artists from around the country to develop real-world grant writing experience through applying for the New England Foundation for the Arts’ National Dance Project (NDP) grant. During an intensive 7-week period between January and March 2022 students will work with selected artists to research, write, and complete a grant application. Interns will be mentored by NCCAkron Executive/Artistic Director Christy Bolingbroke while creating a working cohort in Akron that convenes regularly to complete and submit the grant, while expanding choreographers’ administrative capacity.

Last year, arts administration graduate student **Rachael Reynolds** (Akron, OH) worked with choreographer **Hari Krishnan** (Middletown, CT) during the grant writing internship. “I like to think about things academically, historically, and aesthetically,” she said. “And I’ve recognized that I’m better at stoking fires than starting them.” Krishnan called Reynolds “the patron saint of my NDP application — she [was] able to couch everything in such compassionate, thoughtful ways.”

Inaugural National Summit Convening on Arts Administration in Akron

In June 2022, NCCAkron will host the inaugural **National Summit Convening** for its **Creative Administration Research program**. The conference will bring up to 50 Artists, Thought Partners, and university academia together as collaborating scholars to research and examine business practices that better reflect creative practices. This event builds on NCCAkron's Creative Administration Research program, a multi-year working think tank of dance Artists and Thought Partners who are investigating and challenging the traditionally-recognized business of dance.

The third cohort of Creative Administration Research artists will begin their work in fall 2021: **Rosie Herrera** (Miami, FL); **Dominic Moore-Dunson** (Akron, OH); **Iquail Shaheed** (Philadelphia, PA); **jumatatu poe** (Philadelphia, PA); and **Pioneer Winter** (Miami, FL). Creative Administration Research is supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Calendar of Events

Fall 2021:

September 1: *Shifting Cultural Power* by Hope Mohr (San Francisco, CA) published

September 10-November 12: Second season of *Inside The Dancer's Studio* podcast

September 16: Dancing Conversation with Monica Bill Barnes (New York, NY)

October 7-November 4: *Shifting Cultural Power* Study Group co-facilitated by Hope Mohr (San Francisco, CA) and Taja Will (Minneapolis, MN)

October 9-22: Community Commissioning Residency with Ben Needham-Wood (San Francisco, CA)

October 21: Dancing Conversation with Hope Mohr (San Francisco, CA)

December 9: Dominic Moore-Dunson (Akron, OH) Work-in-Progress showing

December 13-17: Pioneer Winter (Miami, FL) Technical Residency and Work-in-Progress showing

December 16: Dancing Conversation with Lionel Popkin and South Asian Experimental Dance Artists

Spring 2022:

January 10-March 1: Grant writing internship period

January 24-April 16: 21st Century Dance Practices capsule series and live *Inside the Dancer's Studio* events

June 2-4: Inaugural National Summit Convening on Arts Administration

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NCCAkron programs and activities are made possible in part with support from The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; the Akron Community Foundation; the GAR Foundation; Akron Civic Commons; the Ohio Arts Council; The University of Akron; the National Endowment for the Arts; and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

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.

Artist Biographies

Abby Zbikowski (Champaign-Urbana, IL)

Abby Zbikowski founded her company Abby Z and the New Utility in 2012. Zbikowski is a 2020 United States Artists Fellow, an inaugural Caroline Hearst Choreographer-In-Residence at the Lewis Center of the Arts at Princeton University (2017-19) and is currently an 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 the American Dance Festival. Zbikowski holds a BFA in dance from Temple University and an MFA from The Ohio State University. abbyznewutility.org

Amy Miller (New York, NY)

Amy Miller, originally from Ohio, is an NYC-based dancer, choreographer, educator, and advocate. Formerly with the Ohio Ballet, she was also a founding member and artistic associate of Cleveland-based GroundWorks DanceTheater. Now a Director and a performing member of Gibney Company in NYC, Miller also focuses on Gibney's Community Action initiatives through facilitating movement workshops with survivors of trauma, conducting both local and international training for artists interested in engaging

in social action, developing healthy relationship workshops for young people and raising awareness about the role of the arts in violence prevention. Gibneydance.org

Ben Needham-Wood (San Francisco, CA)

Ben Needham-Wood is an Emmy Award-winning choreographer based in San Francisco. His works have been presented nationally by professional companies, TV networks, commercial airlines, film festivals, and galas. Ben is an Artistic Fellow with Amy Seiwert's Imagery, as well as the founder of Redirecting Dance, which uses dance to raise awareness and increase education around critical social issues.

bneedhamwood.com

Brian Brooks (New York, NY)

Choreographer Brian Brooks grew up in Hingham, MA and moved to New York in 1994. His work 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, and the Works and Process series at the Guggenheim Museum, among others. Beyond his company, Brooks has developed work with renowned ballet dancers (including Wendy Whelan), actors, and student groups. 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

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 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. Moore-Dunson currently serves on the board of ArtsNow and the Akron Cultural Plan Steering Committee. <https://www.instagram.com/dmooredun/>

Guillaume Gabriel (France)

Guillaume Gabriel is the co-founder and manager of Compagnie Hervé Koubi. He has been a creative collaborator with Koubi since 2001, assisting the development of choreography and designing sets and costumes. The company's current work explores gender and the cultures of the Mediterranean basin, combining contemporary and urban dance movements, capoeira, and martial arts.

Hope Mohr (San Francisco, CA)

Hope Mohr is a white, queer choreographer, curator, writer, and attorney based in the San Francisco Bar Area on the ancestral lands of the Ramaytush Ohlone people. She co-directs The Bridge Project with Cherie Hill and Karla Quintero. In 2007, she founded HMD to create and support embodied art and social change. In 2010, she founded HMD's core program, The Bridge Project, which creates and supports equity-driven live art that builds community and centers artists as agents of change. In 2020, The Bridge Project shifted to an equity-driven model of distributed leadership. www.bridgeproject.art

Iquail Shaheed (Philadelphia, PA)

Iquail Shaheed is the founder and executive artistic director of DANCE IQUAIL!. As a native of Philadelphia, Shaheed trained at Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts and PHILADANCO. Shaheed received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Ballet Performance from the University of the Arts, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Purchase College – SUNY. Shaheed has received Lower Manhattan Cultural Council grant awards, The Caroline H. Newhouse Award, The Suzanne and Larry Engman Award, The Philadelphia Dance Award (Rocky), The Marion D. Cuyjet Award, NAACP ACT-SO National Silver Medal, and The Promising Artist Award.

<http://danceiquail.org>

James Graham (San Francisco, CA)

James Graham is a San Francisco based choreographer, performer, and teacher. His company James Graham Dance Theatre presents the work of Graham and other choreographers. JGDT has recently been presented at ODC Theatre, Micadanses in Paris, France, UC Berkeley's Zellerbach Playhouse, Bates College, and in the Daegu International Dance Festival in South Korea. Graham has taught Ohad Naharin's Gaga technique extensively both domestically and abroad. He is currently on faculty at the University of California, Berkeley and Dominican University of California/LINES BFA Program. Graham holds an M.F.A. from The Ohio State University and a B.A. from UC Berkeley.

jumatatu poe (Philadelphia, PA)

jumatatu m. poe is a choreographer and performer. Their work strives to engage and further dialogues with Black queer individuals, creating compelling and challenging performance work that recognizes History as only one option for the contextualization of the present, and imagines options for artists' economic and emotional sustainability. poe's early exposure to concert dance was through African dance and capoeira performances on California college campuses where their Pan-Africanist parents studied and worked. They began dance training in college with Umfundalai, Kariamuwelsh's contemporary African dance technique. poe has been a professor of dance at

multiple colleges and universities, including ten years at his undergraduate alma mater Swarthmore College. In 2007, he earned his MFA in Dance from Temple University.

Kayla Farrish (New York, NY)

Kayla Farrish is a dancer, choreographer, director, and photographer with a vision for intimate storytelling. Originally from North Carolina, she graduated from the University of Arizona summa cum laude in 2013. Her company, Decent Structure Arts, combines filmmaking, photography, and dance. Choreographic commissions include *Of Bones Dance* (2014) and *Houses on the Moon Theater Company* (2016). In 2019, she created *The New Frontier Film* and *The New Frontier (My Dear America) pt.1* with the support of a Danspace Project Fall 2019 Commission. <https://www.kaylafarrish.com/>

Nicole Klaymoon (Oakland, CA)

Klaymoon founded the Embodiment Project (EP) in 2008. Her signature approach to dance-making emphasizes the sacred practice of voicing stories of trauma in the context of community. She has directed and choreographed nine evening-length productions and produced two multi-city weeklong festivals that included workshops, panels, battles, and showcases featuring hip hop historians from across the US. Klaymoon serves on faculty in the dance department at the University of San Francisco and has worked as an arts educator in over 30 schools across the San Francisco Bay Area. embodimentproject.org/about-directors

Paula Mann (Minneapolis, MN)

Throughout her long and varied choreographic career, Paula Mann has created over 55 dance works. From 1977-1987 she lived and worked in New York, becoming one of the primary forces in the downtown dance scene before moving to Minneapolis. She is the recipient of numerous grants and awards including a Bush Artist Fellowship, a 2019 McKnight Fellowship for Choreography, and MN State Arts Board awards. From 1993-2013 Mann was full-time faculty at the U of M. She is a graduate of New York University. [Timetrackdance.org](http://timetrackdance.org)

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 serves as Assistant Teaching Professor in the Honors College and College of Communication, Architecture + The Arts at Florida International University. Pioneerwinter.com

Raja Feather Kelly (Brooklyn, NY)

Choreographer/Director Raja Feather Kelly is the artistic director of New Brooklyn Theatre and founder 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/about-raja

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 Baryshnikov Arts Center, The Annenberg Center, Maui Arts and Cultural Center, Dance Place, Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans, The Yard at Martha's Vineyard, and The American Dance Festival at the Joyce NYC in 2016 and 2018.

Taja Will (Minneapolis, MN)

Taja Will is a queer, Latinx (Chilean) adoptee, performer, choreographer, somatic therapist and Healing Justice practitioner based in the Twin Cities (MN), on ancestral Dakota lands of Wahpekute and Anishinabewaki. Taja's approach integrates improvisation, somatic modalities, text and vocals in contemporary performance. Will's work explores visceral connections to current socio-cultural realities through ritual, archetypes and everyday magic. Taja is a recent recipient of the Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship, in the dance field, awarded in 2021. www.tajawillartist.com