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PERFORMANCE RESPONSE JOURNAL 2.0 LAUNCHES DANCE WRITING WORKSHOPS WITH NCCAKRON SATELLITE RESIDENCY SUPPORT



Workshop instructors, from left to right: Benji Hart (photo Kaleb Autman), Brianna Alexis Heath (photo Cholette), Felicia Holman (photo courtesy Holman).

CHICAGO, IL (August 2, 2021) — The Chicago-based **Performance Response Journal (PRJ)**, with support from **National Center for Choreography - Akron (NCCAkron)**, announces a free three-part dance writing workshop series on August 18 & 25 and September 1. These workshops prioritize Chicago, Midwestern, and Rust Belt BIPOC art and dance writers interested in starting or restarting their dance/performance writing practice. *Deconstructing Language: Liberationist Writing for Performance* will be taught by **Benji Hart** (Chicago, IL); **Felicia Holman** (Chicago, IL); and **Brianna Alexis Heath** (Atlanta, GA).

“We intend to engage BIPOC writers by offering practical writing and thinking skills that support seeing and responding to performance through a decolonized, pro-Black Feminist, anti-ableist, and queer framework,” said **Aaliyah Christina** (Chicago, IL), a co-organizer of Performance Response Journal. “Participants will walk away with actionable and relevant tools to develop or restart their practices of writing and watching, as well as seeds of their own work.”

All workshops will take place virtually, and are free. Sessions will be recorded, and will be available to watch through the PRJ website in the future. All interested writers are welcome to RSVP; however, space is limited, and QTBIPOC writers and writers with

connections to Chicago, the Midwest, and the Rust Belt will be prioritized. The workshops are open to anyone regardless of experience with dance and performance writing.

Workshop dates (artist bios below):

- Wednesday, August 18, 6 - 7:30 pm CT with **Benji Hart** (Chicago, IL)
- Wednesday, August 25, 6 - 7:30 pm CT with **Felicia Holman** (Chicago, IL)
- Wednesday, September 1, 6 - 7:30 pm CT with **Brianna Alexis Heath** (Atlanta, GA)

RSVP link (register at least 48 hours in advance of each workshop):

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0tde2upjgsHdf5uk358PsiZZyuPvlvd81n>

These workshops are made possible by a NCCAkron Satellite Residency. “Dance writing is part of advocating for the art form as a more central part of culture in the U.S.” says NCCAkron Executive/Artistic Director **Christy Bolingbroke**. “We’re proud to support regionally-focused dance writing platforms like Performance Response Journal.” NCCAkron’s continued advocacy for dance writing has taken shape not only through these workshops but also through its 2018 Low-Res Dance Writing Lab, which experimented with the core ideas, distribution, and audience of dance writing; and a partnership with The University of Akron Press to publish a series of books on dance which focus on traditionally-overlooked individuals, regions, and genres. The first book in that series, Hope Mohr’s *Shifting Cultural Power*, will be published on September 1 2021.

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About Performance Response Journal

Performance Response Journal (PRJ) highlights voices by artists for artists. Performance Response Journal strays away from the white supremacist format to create an anti-capitalist prism without hyper-criticism and medium degradation. We aim to provide a platform from writers of all forms & styles: essay, poetry, prose, etc. that encompass all contributors to Chicago’s performance community.

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 of NCCAkrón was made possible by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Workshop Leaders Biographies

Benji Hart (Chicago, IL) is a Chicago-based author, artist, and educator. Their essays and poems have appeared in numerous anthologies, and their commentary has been published at *Teen Vogue*, *Time Magazine*, *The Advocate*, and others. They have led workshops for organizations and at academic institutions internationally, and facilitated convenings for groups like Law For Black Lives, National Bail Out, and Organized Communities Against Deportations. Their performances have been featured at CA2M (Madrid), Museo del Chopo (Mexico City), BRIC (New York), and elsewhere. They have been a fellow at the Rauschenberg Foundation, MacDowell, and are a 3Arts awardee in the Teaching Arts. benjihart.com

Brianna Alexis Heath (Atlanta, GA) is a dancer, writer, and curator. Bri is a graduate of Columbia College Chicago (BA) where she received the 2017 Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean's Award or Outstanding BA Thesis in Cultural Studies for her senior thesis: "Bodies as Living, Twirling, Sacrifices: Performing Black Girlhood, Liturgical Dance, and the Black Church Tradition." She is currently pursuing a Master of Theological Studies (MTS) at Emory University.

As a curator, Bri served as the co-director of the inaugural Black Arts Festival at Columbia College Chicago (2018), and the two-day gathering for emerging artists, Artist Convening (2019), in Kaduna and Abuja, Nigeria. Bri's research interests include performance studies, writing as performance, Blackpentecostalism, and womanist theology. As the co-founder of D'atè Culture Foundation--a Nigeria-based arts and culture organization for emerging artists of African descent--Bri believes in the power of stories and creating spaces where artists of color can be supported in creating and sustaining fulfilling and impactful arts careers. briannaalexisheath.weebly.com

Felicia Holman (Chicago, IL) is a native Chicagoan, independent cultural producer/facilitator, and a co-founder of Afrodiasporic feminist creative collective Honey Pot Performance. She is a 2020-22 Threewalls RaDLOW fellow. She is also a 2021 Re:Place Research and Performance resident artist, and a co-organizer of the re-launched Performance Response Journal platform.

Felicia's creative/ professional and social practices are firmly grounded in critical thought, intersectionality, community building and embodied storytelling. Projects include her recently completed *Welcome to Bucktown* public conversation series (as part of her RaDLOW fellowship), as well as commissioned performances for Gallery 400, Illinois Humanities and the 5th annual Instigation Festival. Additionally, Felicia has published contributions at See Chicago Dance, 6018North, and The Quarantine Times (published by Public Media Institute).

Especially now, Felicia relishes her artpreneurial life and sums it up in 3 words---"Creator, Connector, Conduit".

IG: [@feliciaholman](#)