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## THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHOREOGRAPHY-AKRON HOSTS DANCING CONVERSATION: THE CREATIVE PROCESS IN NATURE



*Monika “Bell” Bowman, Chris Coles, and Dominic Moore-Dunson;  
photo by Mal McCrea (Akron Life Magazine).*

Akron, OH (January 26, 2026) — As part of its 10th anniversary programming, The National Center for Choreography—Akron (NCCAkron) hosts a **Dancing Conversation: The Creative Process in Nature** event April 17 at the F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm. NCCAkron Executive/Artistic Director Christy Bolingbroke will facilitate a discussion around incorporating nature as a part of artists' creative process. Akron-based artists include choreographer Dominic Moore-Dunson and his work *Black by Nature*, saxophonist Chris Coles and wildlife specialist Monika ‘Bell’ Bowman and their project AVIMANCY, and Josy Jones, founder of The Chameleon Village.

Dominic Moore-Dunson's *Black By Nature* explores Black identity in relationship to natural spaces—interrogating safety, grief, and redemption. It asks what it means to be Black in nature, and how returning to the land might offer both confrontation and healing.

For **AVIMANCY**, saxophonist Chris Coles and wildlife specialist Monika “Bell” Bowman are transcribing birdsong—from Akron and beyond—into musical scores. NCCAkron is connecting them with percussive dance artists from across the U.S. for further translation and musical/rhythmic experimentation.

Josy Jones’s *I Got Questions* is a one-person outdoor theatre performance following a woman as she interrogates her close and intimate friend, a tree. In the site-specific work, Jones tries to reconnect with nature: the nature of the world and the nature of self.

### Event Details

Dancing Conversation: The Creative Process in Nature

Friday, April 17, 3:30-5pm

F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm

1828 Smith Rd, Akron, OH 44313

FREE with RSVP:

[nccakron.org/event-details/dancing-conversation-the-creative-process-in-nature](http://nccakron.org/event-details/dancing-conversation-the-creative-process-in-nature)

“At NCCAkron, we champion dance as a vital part of American culture — a way we understand ourselves and the world around us. Artists remind us of the potential for clarity and creativity in nature,” shares Bolingbroke. “This conversation invites audiences to observe the literal ecosystems all around us and how we are truly interconnected.”

Established in 2015 with lead support from Knight Foundation, [NCCAkron](#) is one of only two national centers for choreography in the U.S. Nationally recognized for redefining support for dance artists and thought leaders, to date, NCCAkron has worked with [800+ choreographers](#) from 100 U.S. cities as they explore, experiment, and shape the future of the art form. The organization also offers audiences opportunities to experiment with and understand dance through conversations, events, podcasts, and books.

### Artist Bios

**Monika “Moni” Bowman** is a multidisciplinary artist and wildlife educator based in Akron, Ohio. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Environmental and Conservation Biology (2024) from Kent State University and an Associate of Art (2015) from El Centro College. With roots in the North Texas arts community, Bowman, aka Moni Bell, has over fifteen years’ experience in community outreach, communications, arts education and performance production. Bowman’s art, music and poetry practice places storytelling and the delicacy of the natural world at the heart of visual, performative, musical and written works. Bowman is a regular contributor to WildOhio magazine with her work as Wildlife Communications Specialist at the Ohio Division of Wildlife. Her work with DOW allows the great privilege of sharing information about wildlife to the greater public of northeast Ohio. Her joy has forever been considering animals in the natural world and how they reflect the complex workings of the human mind and society at large.

**Christopher J. Coles** graduated from Cleveland South High School in 2004 while studying with the renowned educator and saxophonist Kenneth LeeGrand. In 2009 Coles received his bachelor's degree in Saxophone Performance from Youngstown State University where he studied with educators such as: Dr. James C. Umble (saxophone), Dr. Kent Englehardt (saxophone), and Dr. David Morgan (bass). Amid developing his own style and sound, Coles went on to receive his master's degree in Saxophone Performance from the University of Akron in 2012. Coles has performed with highly respected jazz musicians such as the Grammy Award winning Slide Hampton, Sean Jones, Dan Wilson, Dominick Farinacci, Eddie Baccus Sr., Melvin Burks, Kenny Davis, Glenn Holmes, Bill Ransom, Cecil Rucker, Ralph Lalama, and Allen Vizzutti to name a few. Coles was invited to perform in Italy with the Ohio Youth Jazz Orchestra where he performed with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra's lead alto saxophonist, Wessell Anderson. Coles has also played at the North American Saxophone Alliance Regional Festival in West Virginia at the International Saxophone Symposium in Washington D.C. to premiere a commissioned work by John Hollenbeck, which he later recorded on Hollenbeck's 2009 LP Rainbow Jimmies. Coles was invited to The Banff Workshop for Jazz and Creative music in Alberta, Canada where he was granted the distinct honor of studying with some of the great jazz pioneers such as: Tia Fuller, Somi, Vijay Iyer, Billy Hart, Mark Turner, Imani Izuri, Ingrid Jensen, Zakir Hussain, Yosvany Terry, and Miles Okazaki to name a few. In 2017 Chris was an awardee of the Knight Arts Challenge in Akron, Ohio which catapulted him to receive grant funding from GAR Foundation and the Cleveland Foundation for his multimedia tribute to the victims of the 2015 mass church shooting in South Carolina appropriately titled "Nine Lives", which premiered in 2019. Chris is a Yamaha Performing Artist currently based out of Akron, Ohio and serves on the faculty at Oberlin Conservatory, The University of Akron and The Tri-C Creative Arts JazzFest Academy where he takes pride in bridging the gap to help the next generation of jazz giants.

**Dominic Moore-Dunson**, *Dance Magazine*'s 2023 "25 to Watch," is an award-winning choreographer, performer, and storyteller based in Akron, Ohio. His work blends contemporary dance, physical theater, live music, and spoken word to explore themes of race, identity, memory, and belonging through what he calls Urban Midwest Storytelling, narratives shaped by growing up Black in post-industrial America.

Dominic is the creator of *inCOPnegro: Aftermath*, a dance-theater work exploring the long-term impact of police violence on Black communities, and *The Remember Balloons*, an intergenerational family performance inspired by the children's book of the same name, helping audiences navigate conversations around Alzheimer's and memory loss. His digital essay series The Block on Substack mixes story, satire, and soul to reflect on the creative hustle, cultural tension, and everyday truths of life as a Black artist navigating America.

A 2024 Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award recipient, Dominic's work has been presented across the U.S. and featured in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Akron Beacon Journal*. He creates immersive, multidisciplinary experiences that connect with audiences across generations and backgrounds. He believes in the transformative power of storytelling to challenge, heal, and invite deeper reflection on what it means to be human.

**Josy Jones** is an actor, director, playwright and community organizer. With a Bachelor's degree in Theatre and International Relations, her work has always been focused on providing a platform to amplify the voices of different communities. Jones' goal is to shine a light on under-utilized and underappreciated spaces and businesses, provide space for artists to explore their talents, and be a force for making theatre an inclusive artform. Out of these goals, the Chameleon Village was born in 2015. Awarded the 2018 Emerging Cities Champions Fellowship through 880s Cities and the Knight Foundation, Jones created a walking site-specific theatre tour through the Cascade Valley neighborhood called "Reimagining the Village." This project provided residents of the neighborhood the opportunity to learn playwriting, activate underappreciated space and reshape the narrative of their neighborhood. Her work has activated tattoo parlors, art galleries, created walking theatrical pieces and provided many opportunities for creatives to explore their practices through mentorship and new project development. Jones hopes to help site-specific theatre shape economic development through community engagement.

### ***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](http://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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