

Media Contact:

Mariclare Hulbert, Publicist

585.278.2302

mariclare.hulbert@gmail.com

**NCCAKRON AND THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON SCHOOL OF DANCE, THEATRE, AND
ARTS ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCE THE FOURTH YEAR OF
21ST CENTURY DANCE PRACTICES**



Photo credits (L to R): Jemal "P-Top" De La Cruz (photo Wills Glasspiegel) and Sterling "Steelo" Lofton (photo Wills Glasspiegel) of The Era Footwork Crew, Errin Weaver (photo Trestle Board), André M. Zachery, Joseph "MN Joe" Tran (photo Isabel Fajardo) and Lisa "MonaLisa" Berman (photo Adam Adolphus) of BRKFST Dance Company, Raphael Xavier (photo Joanna Futral), and slowdanger (taylor knight + anna thompson) (photo Audrey Gatewood).

AKRON, Ohio (January 24, 2023)—**The National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron (NCCAkron) and The University of Akron School of Dance, Theatre, and Arts Administration (DTAA)** are proud to announce the fourth year of **21st Century Dance Practices**, a capsule series of classes guest taught by today's working dance artists. The six choreographers and companies include **The Era Footwork Crew** (Chicago, IL), **Errin Weaver** (Cleveland, OH), **André M. Zachery** (Brooklyn, NY), **BRKFST Dance Company** (Saint Paul, MN), **Raphael Xavier** (Philadelphia, PA), and **slowdanger (anna thompson + taylor knight)** (Pittsburgh, PA).

21st Century Dance Practices is a capsule series that represents genres, geographies, and cultural and social contexts outside the traditional binary of modern dance and ballet in a conservatory setting. This year's lineup includes artists who explore street dance, video technology, and social dynamics, among other lines of inquiry. The series will challenge students to stretch past the basic dance curriculum and receive benefits beyond the typical one-off master class.

"As a research and development space for the national dance landscape, NCCAkron seeks to build a bridge between 20th century working knowledge and building a 21st century dance

ecosystem,” says NCCAkron Executive/Artistic Director **Christy Bolingbroke**. “By collaborating with The University of Akron, we support our founding partner by challenging its dance program to expand its definition of dance to something broader than ballet or modern dance faster than it can currently evolve its curriculum and operating structure.”

In addition to guest teaching, 21st Century Dance Practice artists will participate in **Inside the Dancer’s Studio**, an ongoing series of interviews that are free and open to the public. This series of morning talks explore creativity, the craft of choreography, and navigating an artistic career. All conversations will take place on Fridays at 9:30 am ET in Guzzetta Hall on The University of Akron’s campus. Visit [nccakron.org/events](https://www.nccakron.org/events) for a full listing of public events.

"I am really thrilled by this line up of talented artists, whom I truly believe, will be able to challenge our dancers in this constantly evolving world of dance," says **Wilfried Souly**, Assistant Professor of Dance. "NCCAkron, our long time partner, always introduces our students to artists who are contributing to shaping dance and our world."

The capsule series is the annual spring phase of **Ideas in Motion**, a larger initiative launched in 2020 and supported by NCCAkron, The University of Akron, The University of Akron Foundation, and the Mary Schiller Myers Lecture Series in the Arts.

21st Century Dance Practices takes place for six of the 15 weeks in DTAA's Modern III-IV and Modern V-VIII Spring 2023 semester. **Christine Howe**, Assistant Lecturer of Dance at The University of Akron and dance program alumnus, expressed excitement heading into the fourth year of this program: "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. As an instructor, I have been inspired by our students' openness and adaptability. It is thrilling to witness them engaging fully with different pedagogical styles and for the guest artists to be fully immersed in our community."

Artist biographies are listed below.

Inside the Dancer’s Studio Live Events

All talks are free and open to the public.

RSVP: <https://www.nccakron.org/events>

Fridays at 9:30 am ET, Studio 194, Guzzetta Hall, 228 E Buchtel Ave, Akron, OH 44325

Estimated event run times are 30 minutes in total.

Friday, February 3, 2023

9:30 am ET

Errin Weaver (Cleveland, OH)

Friday, February 17, 2023

9:30 am ET

André M. Zachery (Brooklyn, NY)

Friday, February 24, 2023

9:30 am ET

BRKFST Dance Company (Saint Paul, MN)

Friday, March 3, 2023

9:30 am ET

Raphael Xavier (Philadelphia, PA)

Friday, March 17, 2023

9:30 am ET

slowdanger (anna thompson + taylor knight) (Pittsburgh, PA)

*TBD

The Era Footwork Crew (Chicago, IL)

###

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.

About The University of Akron School of Dance, Theatre & Arts Administration

The University of Akron School of Dance, Theatre, and Arts Administration (DTAA) prepares students for successful performing, academic, and administrative careers in the arts. Its diverse student body works with distinguished, award-winning faculty in classes that offer technical training, theoretical study, practical experience, and creative skill-building. The Dance Program offers both a B.F.A. and B.A. with Business Cognate. The Theatre Arts Program offers a B.A. with four tracks, including applied theatre and social entrepreneurship. The school's M.A. in Arts Administration provides students with the education necessary to work in all disciplines of the non-profit arts. DTAA is headed by Marc Reed, D.M.A., who also directs the School of Music. For more information, visit uakron.edu/dtaa.

About the Mary Schiller Myers Lecture Series in the Arts

Ideas in Motion is made possible by the support of The University of Akron Foundation's Mary Schiller Myers Lecture Series in the Arts. NCCAkron is grateful to Stephen E. Myers, trustee of the University of Akron Foundation and the Myers Foundation and son of Mary Schiller Myers, for his support.

Established in 1979 under the sponsorship of the Mary and Louis S. Myers Foundation, this endowed lecture series brings significant representatives of the arts to campus and community annually, to share their particular talents with students, faculty, and residents of the community. These events can include performances, lectures, and masterclasses.

Artist Biographies

The Era Footwork Crew (Chicago, IL) are pioneers of the battle dance known as Chicago footwork. Since 2014, they have expanded upon what it means to be a dance crew, addressing inequality and racism through their lyrics and panel discussions and supporting women and girls in the history of footwork through collaboration and documentation. They have performed from Japan to Peru, performing and choreographing alongside leading artists such as Chance the Rapper, DJ Rashad, DJ Spinn, and Theaster Gates. Institutions like the Field Foundation, the University of Chicago, the Joyce Foundation, and NEFA (New England Foundation For The Arts) have recognized The Era with grants in support of the group's boundary-breaking artistic and social leadership. The Eras work has been in short documentaries by VICE, CBC (Canadian Broadcast Company), and the Chicago Tribune. theerafootworkcrew.com

Jemal “P-Top” De La Cruz rose to prominence as a battle dancer in the footwork group Goon Squad. In 2014, P-Top co-founded The Era Footwork Crew. He has long been focused on the youth of Chicago, creating an event series called “The Ring” on the south side of Chicago. P-Top also helps run social media for the nonprofit Open the Circle, where he interviews and publishes stories featuring other footwork dancers across generations in Chicago. Alongside The Era, he was awarded a National Dance Project grant from the New England Foundation for the Arts. P-Top is the father of five sons.

Sterling “Steelo” Lofton is among the world’s top footwork dancers. In 2014, Steelo co-founded The Era Footwork Crew and began to tour internationally. He has danced at festivals such as Pitchfork and Lollapalooza. Steelo was recognized as a choreographer of the year (New City Magazine) and cultural organizer of the year (FADER Magazine) alongside The Era. Steelo is focused on the fashion side of dancing, helping to design merchandise and visual art to represent footwork and The Era. He created “footwork saves lives,” a campaign to help bring awareness to footwork as a positive outlet for youth in Chicago.

Errin Weaver (Cleveland, OH) is a community activator and the Executive Artistic Director of Mojuba! Dance Collective based in Cleveland, Ohio. She is currently completing her thesis toward an MFA in Choreography and Interdisciplinary Studies from Wilson College. Errin has taught, been in residency, and sat on panels regarding sacred dance rooted in the Gospel tradition and Africanist dance forms extensively. Through her work, she has created the Emerging Black Choreographers Incubator, hosted countless workshops and festivals, and become a published author. Her choreography has been presented regionally and internationally, and has received awards and commissioned support. She has been deeply

vested in wellness and the community arts where she has facilitated training sessions, free outdoor movement workshops, and a collaborative evening length work uniting professional and aspiring artists in a telling of Black American history. mojubadance.com

André M. Zachery (Brooklyn, NY) is an interdisciplinary artist and the artistic director of the Brooklyn-based dance company Renegade Performance Group. André holds a BFA from Fordham University/Alvin Ailey and MFA in Performance & Interactive Media Arts from CUNY/Brooklyn College. He is a 2016 New York Foundation for the Arts Gregory Millard Fellow in Choreography and a 2019 Jerome Hill Foundation Fellow in Choreography. His works through RPG have been presented domestically and internationally, receiving support through several residencies, awards, and commissions. André is currently a faculty member of the NYU Tisch Dance Department. As a scholar, he has been a member of panels, led group talks, facilitated discussions, and presented research on a myriad of topics, including Afrofuturism, African Diaspora practices and philosophies, Black cultural aesthetics, technology in art and performance, and expanding the boundaries of art making within the community. He is an advisory board member of ATLAS Institute at the University of Colorado. André has taught at Brooklyn College and been a guest faculty member at the dance programs of Florida State University, Virginia Commonwealth University, The Ohio State University, the University of California Los Angeles, and the University of California Riverside. renegadepg.com

BRKFST Dance Company (Saint Paul, MN), founded in 2014, is a collaborative ensemble of breaking choreographers based in Saint Paul, MN. BRKFST incorporates abstract, narrative, and pedestrian driven movement into their impressive and physically rigorous work by combining breaking with contemporary dance vernacular.

BRKFST performs regionally, premiering work at the Walker Arts Center, Southern Theater, The Cowles Center and Orchestra Hall with The Minnesota Orchestra, nationally in Belding Theater at The Bushnell with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, and internationally to Dublin, Ireland in connection with Dance2Connect Hip Hop Festival. brkfstdance.com

Lisa 'MonaLisa' Berman is the founder and Artistic Director of BRKFST Dance Company. She is the recipient of the 2019 Artist Initiative Grant, 2016 McKnight Dancer Fellowship, and 2008 Jerome Travel Grant. Berman, alongside BRKFST, has set repertoire and original works on dancers at Bates Dance Festival, Dance2Connect Hip Hop Festival in Dublin, Ireland, The University of Minnesota, Carleton College, and Hamline University. She has performed in Minnesota, Connecticut, Florida, Washington DC, New York, Netherlands, and Ireland. Berman works as a Breaking instructor for Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists and a resident Teaching Artist for The Cowles Center.

Joseph 'MN Joe' Tran is a founding member of BRKFST Dance Company and a member of Knuckleheads Cali breaking crew. Tran is known for his signature moves which have earned him multiple victories in breaking competitions across the US,

Europe, and South America. He is the recipient of the 2023 Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship and the 2019 McKnight Dancer Fellowship, and has performed locally throughout Saint Paul/Minneapolis, nationally in Connecticut, and internationally in Ireland. Tran has set repertoire with BRKFST at the University of Minnesota, Carleton College, and Bates Dance Festival. Tran currently works as a Breaking instructor for Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists and Young Dance.

Raphael Xavier (Philadelphia, PA) has forged an exceptional approach to improvisation, clearing the path for those interested in breaking as an art form. A multifaceted creator who draws inspiration from his many talents in dance, music, photography, and writing, Xavier's original works are a transcendent mix of poetry, precision, and spontaneity. His extensive research in Hip Hop forms and culture, specifically Breaking, has led to the creation of Ground-Core, a Somatic dance technique. Originally from Wilmington, Delaware, Xavier is a 2013 Pew Fellowship Grantee and 2016 Guggenheim Fellow. Xavier currently lives in Philadelphia and is a professor at Princeton University. raphaelxavier.org

taylor knight and **anna thompson** (Pittsburgh, PA) are co-founding artistic directors of **slowdanger**, a multidisciplinary performance entity utilizing movement, found material, integrative technology, electronic instrumentation, and vocalization to produce performance work since 2013. They have been listed in Dance Magazine's "25 to Watch" (2018) and featured by MoMA, The Kennedy Center, The Warhol Museum, Usine C, and more. They are 2022 awardees of the NPN Creation Fund and NEFA/National Dance Project to create their upcoming work, SUPERCELL. slowdangerslowdanger.com

###