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**NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHOREOGRAPHY-AKRON LAUNCHES
INSIDE THE DANCER'S STUDIO**

-- A New Podcast Featuring Interviews with Choreographers from Across the US --



Left: Dominic Moore-Dunson and Christy Bolingbroke. Right: Mustapha Braimah and Bolingbroke. Dale Dong Photography.

AKRON, Ohio (May 24, 2021) — **The National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron (NCCAkrON)** has launched *Inside the Dancer's Studio*, a new podcast that brings listeners into the process of creating dance. Through interviews with choreographers from across the United States, *Inside the Dancer's Studio* dissolves the mystique of dance-making into engaging, fun, and deeply human conversation about what moves artists to express their truths through creation and performance.

Artists featured in the Season 1 include: **Bebe Miller** (Columbus, OH), **Jesse Factor** (Slippery Rock, PA), **Bridgman|Packer Dance** (Valley Cottage, NY), **Taja Will** (Minneapolis, MN), **Helen Simoneau** (Winston-Salem, NC), **Paloma McGregor** (New York, NY/St. Croix, USVI), **Samantha Speis** (New York, NY), **Mustapha Braimah** (Asheville, NC/Cleveland, OH), and **Dominic Moore-Dunson** (Akron, OH).

The podcast's host, NCCAkrON Executive/Artistic Director **Christy Bolingbroke**, poses a set series of questions about craft, process, and perseverance to each interviewee, including: how

do they name a piece? What do they look for in collaborators? What do they do if they find themselves stuck, creatively?

Each episode was recorded as part of a lunchtime conversation series presented by NCCAkron with support from The University of Akron. These short talks are perfect for budding dancers, dancemakers, creatives, or anyone who has ever built something from scratch. New episodes are released each Friday.

“I’m thrilled to share these conversations about how artists approach their craft, beyond just the latest project a choreographer is developing,” says Bolingbroke. “And with each episode we get yet another perspective on the choreographic process. The series represents the broad expanse and possibilities of dance making today.”

The *Inside the Dancer’s Studio* lunchtime talk series is supported by NCCAkron, The University of Akron, The University of Akron Foundation, and the Mary Schiller Myers Lecture Series in the Arts.

The podcast is produced by Jennifer Edwards with Ellis Rovin as engineer, transcription by Madeline Greenberg, music by Floco Torres, and cover art by Micah Kraus. Julian Curet and Kat Wentz coordinate the ‘live’ *Inside The Dancer’s Studio* program. Available on most podcast streaming platforms by searching for “Inside the Dancer’s Studio.”

For more information and to listen to episodes, visit nccakron.org/podcast.

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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.

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

Inside the Dancer’s Studio host biography

As the Founding Executive/Artistic Director for NCCAkron, Christy Bolingbroke is responsible for setting the business model and curatorial vision for all programs. She works closely with every artist to support their artistic/administrative growth and to develop educational outreach opportunities for the local community to interact with the visiting artists. Previously, Christy served as Deputy Director for Advancement at ODC in San Francisco, overseeing curation and performance programming as well as marketing and development organization-wide. Prior to

ODC, she was Director of Marketing at the Mark Morris Dance Group. She is currently a member of the Akron Civic Commons core team and a mentor in the South Arts MOMENTUM initiative. In the past, she has also served as a consulting advisor for the Bloomberg Philanthropies Arts Innovation Management initiative, and on the New England Foundation for the Arts National Dance Project Advisory Panel. In 2017, DANCE Magazine named Bolingbroke among the national list of most influential people in dance today.

Guest biographies

Episode 1: 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

Episode 2: Jesse Factor (Slippery Rock, PA)

Jesse Factor's growing repertoire of solo work has been presented in North American venues such as TQ Live! at the Andy Warhol Museum (Pittsburgh), OUTsider Festival (Austin), Milton Art Bank (Milton), RADfest (Kalamazoo), St. Mark's Church in the Bowery (NYC), and Fierce Queer Burlesque (Toronto). Awards include the Twin Cities Arts Reader Critics Pick and Minnesota Fringe Staff Pick for RELIC at the Minnesota Fringe Festival and Outstanding Dance Performance for Marthagany at the Fresh Fruit Festival-NYC. Jesse received the Kelly Strayhorn Alloy Studios Freshworks residency grant (Pittsburgh, PA) for collaborative work with multimedia artist Scott Andrew. Jessefactor.com

Episode 3: Bridgman|Packer Dance (Valley Cottage, NY)

Art Bridgman and Myrna Packer, Artistic Directors of Bridgman|Packer Dance, are Guggenheim Fellows and 2017 NY Dance and Performance Award recipients (The Bessies). Their collaborative work focuses on integrating live performance and video technology to blur the line between image and reality, explore identity, and reveal multiple layers of consciousness. They are also recipients of four NPN Creation Fund Awards and numerous grants from the NEA, National Dance Project, NYSCA, and NYFA. In NYC they have been presented by Lincoln Center, City Center's Fall for Dance Festival, Central Park Summerstage, Sheen Center, and Baryshnikov Arts Center. They have toured throughout the US and abroad to venues including Spoleto Festival USA, Jacob's Pillow, Bates Dance Festival, ICA/Boston, Dance St. Louis, Munich International Dance Festival, Festival Internacional de Artes Escenicas (Panama),

Kintetsu Theater (Osaka, Japan), Festival Internacional Chihuahua (Mexico), The Beirut Spring Festival (Lebanon), and Tanforum (Budapest). Bridgmanpacker.org

Episode 4: Taja Will (Minneapolis, MN)

Taja Will is a queer, Chilean adoptee, performer, choreographer, therapist, and restorative justice facilitator based in the Twin Cities (MN). Their approach integrates improvisation, somatic modalities, text, and vocals in contemporary performance. Will's aesthetic is one of spontaneity, bold choice-making, sonic and kinetic partnership, and the ability to move in relationship to risk and intimacy. They explore visceral connections to current socio-cultural realities through ritual, archetypes, and everyday magic. As an educator, Will has been a guest teacher and adjunct faculty at several institutions locally and throughout the United States. Will also works in healing justice and as an advocate for artists, especially serving as a liaison for artists in experimental forms, people of color, and the LGBTQIA2+ communities. tajawillartist.com

Episode 5: Helen Simoneau (Winston-Salem, NC)

Helen Simoneau, a native of Rimouski, Québec, is the artistic director of Helen Simoneau Danse. Described as “a Choreographer-on-the-rise” — Dance Magazine, Simoneau has been commissioned by The Juilliard School, Oregon Ballet Theatre, American Dance Festival, Springboard Danse Montréal, and Swiss International Coaching Project (SiWiC). She was a resident artist at Baryshnikov Arts Center, NYU/Tisch, Bates Dance Festival, and received fellowships from The NYU Center for Ballet, Ailey's New Directions Lab, and the Bogliasco Foundation. Simoneau was awarded 1st place for Choreography at the 13th Internationales Solo-Tanz-Theater Festival in Stuttgart and was presented at PACT-Zollverein in Essen as a finalist for the Kurt Jooss Prize (Germany). She is currently a Choreographic Fellow at New York City Center. Helensimoneau.org

Episode 6: Paloma McGregor (New York, NY/St. Croix, USVI)

Paloma McGregor (Director, Angelas's Pulse/Dancing While Black) is a Caribbean-born, New York-based choreographer who makes Black work with Black folks in Black space. A former newspaper reporter, she combines a choreographer's craft, journalist's urgency and anti-racist organizer's framework to activate creative communities and shepherd collaborative visioning. Working at the growing edge of her field, McGregor is a 2020 Soros Arts Fellowship recipient, and an inaugural recipient of several major awards, including: Dance/USA's Fellowship to Artists (2019); Urban Bush Women's Choreographic Center Institute Fellowship (2018); and Surdna Foundation's Artists Engaging in Social Change (2015). In 2017, she won a “Bessie” Award for performance with skeleton architecture. angelaspulse.org

Episode 7: Samantha Speis (New York, NY)

Samantha Speis is an improviser and movement artist based in the Bronx, NYC, and is Artistic Director of Urban Bush Women. She has worked with Gesel Mason, The Dance Exchange, Jumatatu Poe, Deborah Hay, Marjani Forte, and Liz Lerman. She is currently a member of The Skeleton Architecture collective of black womyn and gender non-conforming artists and was

recently awarded a Bessie for Outstanding Performer. She has developed a teaching practice that explores pelvic mobility as the root of powerful locomotion and as a point of connection to the stories, experiences, and lineages that reside in each of us.

urbanbushwomen.org/the-company

Episode 8: Mustapha Braimah (Asheville, NC/Cleveland, OH)

Mustapha Braimah brings over two decades of international experience and high artistic acclaim to his roles as an artist-scholar from Ghana, West Africa. He is a choreographer, educator, curator, performer, musician, and administrator. He holds an M.F.A in Dance from the University of Maryland, M.A in African Studies, Ohio University and B.F.A in Dance, University of Ghana. He is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor and Director of Dance Program at UNC Asheville. His art practice and creativity are deeply rooted in contemporary, popular and traditional forms. His works utilize diverse virtuosic approaches in applying 21st-century skills and creativity, including improvisation. mustaphabraimah.weebly.com

Episode 9: 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.

<https://www.instagram.com/dmooredun/>