



Media Contact:  
[contactnccakron@gmail.com](mailto:contactnccakron@gmail.com)  
(330) 972-7923

**NCCAkron and The University of Akron School of Dance, Theatre, and Arts  
Administration Announce Exciting New Collaboration  
Bringing in 9 Artists to Teach Series of 21st Century Dance Practices**



Photo credits (L to R): Cie. Herve Koubi / Karim Amar ; Liz Lerman's *Wicked Bodies* / Greg Nesbit; Mustapha Braimah

AKRON, Ohio — **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 **Ideas in Motion**, a joint initiative supported by NCCAkron, The University of Akron, The University of Akron Foundation, and the Mary Schiller Myers Lecture Series in the Arts. Kicking off this initiative is a new survey series called “21st Century Dance Practices” with classes led by some of the most exciting dance artists working today. Each spring beginning in 2020, nine artists will visit DTAA’s Modern V-VIII course with some classes being opened up to students from other disciplines to drop in as well.

“This initiative goes beyond the standard ‘master classes’ usually appealing to most university programs in conjunction with a scheduled performance,” says NCCAkron Executive/Artistic Director **Christy Bolingbroke**. “Instead we have curated a series of working choreographers to bring their practices into the studio and augment the curriculum. This capsule series is the first rollout in a three-pronged initiative with NCCAkron matching a generous gift from the Mary Schiller Myers Lecture Series in the Arts.”

21st Century Dance Practices are representative of genres, geographies, cultural and/or social contexts outside the traditional binary of modern and ballet in a conservatory setting. The artists

come from as close as Cleveland and as far away as France. They include a range of styles such as West African, hip hop, modern, and contemporary dance, with a number of artists working in between genres.

“This joint initiative with NCCAkron challenges students to be versatile and open, while also firmly rooting them in the present dance field. We look forward to this program expanding the scope of what our students imagine is possible with a dance degree from The University of Akron,” says **Dr. Marc Reed**, Director of The University of Akron’s School of Music and School of Dance, Theatre and Arts Administration.

For some artists, like **Nicole Klaymoon** (Oakland, CA), coming through as part of the 21st Century Dance Practices capsule series will be a return visit to Akron (Klaymoon came to NCCAkron in 2018 to create the recently released dance film “Chrysalis” as part of Dancing Lab: Screendance). For others, like **Liz Lerman** (Tempe, AZ), it will be part of a first visit.

Scheduled artists include others such as **Dianne McIntyre** (Cleveland, OH); **Raja Feather Kelly** (Brooklyn, NY); **Taja Will** (Minneapolis, MN); and **Mustapha Braimah** (Asheville, NC). All artists, when not in class, will enjoy access to NCCAkron’s staff and studio facilities for their ongoing creative development and research.

“This is such a rich opportunity for students and faculty alike — perhaps once in a lifetime,” says **Valerie Ifill**, Assistant Professor of Dance at DTAA. “On the faculty end, it’s exciting to provide a pedagogic through-line for the series and to connect with the visiting artists around their values in dance education. Experimentation and reflection will be a part of our process.”

An ongoing series of interviews with 21st Century Dance Practices artists titled **Inside the Dancer’s Studio** will be open to all. This series of lunchtime talks with today’s dance makers from all over explores creativity, the craft of choreography, and navigating an artistic career. All talks will take place on Mondays or Fridays from 12:30-1pm in Guzzetta Hall 194. Visit [nccakron.org](http://nccakron.org) for a full listing of public events.

###

### **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](http://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 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/](http://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. NCCAkrón is grateful to Stephen E. Myers, trustee of the University of Akron Foundation and of 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 master classes.

### **Artist Biographies**

#### **Mustapha Braimah** (Asheville, NC)

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](http://mustaphabraimah.weebly.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](http://brianbrooksmovingcompany.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](http://thefeath3rtheory.com/about-raja)

**Nicole Klaymoon** (Oakland, CA)

Klaymoon founded 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 including *Music of the Actualized Child*, which delved into the school-to-prison pipeline and how structural racism harms children in school settings. She has 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](http://embodimentproject.org/about-directors)

**Liz Lerman** (Tempe, AZ)

Liz Lerman is a choreographer, performer, writer, educator and speaker, and the recipient of honors including a 2002 MacArthur “Genius Grant” and a 2017 Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award. Key to her artistry is opening her process to various publics, resulting in research and outcomes that are participatory, urgent, and usable. She founded Dance Exchange in 1976 and led it until 2011. Her recent work *Healing Wars* toured the US. Liz teaches Critical Response Process, creative research, the intersection of art and science, and the building of narrative within dance at institutions such as Harvard, Yale School of Drama, and Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Her third book is *Hiking the Horizontal: Field Notes from a Choreographer*. As of 2016 she is an Institute Professor at Arizona State University. [lizlerman.com](http://lizlerman.com)

**Dianne McIntyre** (Cleveland, OH)

Choreographer Dianne McIntyre is a native Clevelander who resided in New York for over thirty years, directing her dance/music company Sounds in Motion. The company toured internationally and operated a popular studio in Harlem, conducting dance classes and producing exceptional choreographers. Ms. McIntyre choreographs for contemporary concert dance, theatre (including Broadway), opera, film, and TV. Her choreographic commissions for companies include Dance Theatre of Harlem, GroundWorks DanceTheater, Dallas Black Dance Theatre, and others. She has taught and performed for American Dance Festival, Jacobs Pillow, Bates Festival, and countless universities. Other major venues where her work has been seen: Joyce Theater, Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, New York Live Arts, and in over 40 Regional Theatre productions. She is the Co-Director of the Hicks Choreography Fellow Program at Jacobs Pillow. Among her screen credits are “Beloved” and “Miss Evers’ Boys” (Emmy Award nomination). Other awards include the Doris Duke Artist Award, Guggenheim Fellowship, 2019 Dance/USA Honor Award, Cuyahoga County Creative Workforce Fellowship, 3 Bessies (New York Dance and Performance Award), Cleveland Arts Prize and numerous grants from the

National Endowment for the Arts. Dianne McIntyre's recent creative residencies have been at Dance Place in Washington, DC, and Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York.

[diannemcintyre.com](http://diannemcintyre.com)

### **Hervé Koubi (France)**

Hervé Koubi grew up in the south of France, where he studied both biology at the University of Aix-en-Provence, and dance. He was a dancer with the Centre Chorégraphique National of Nantes and Centre Choregraphique National of Caen before beginning his choreographic career in 2000. Since 2010, his work draws on his North African roots. It combines contemporary dance, street dance, and martial arts, developing a new technique of Associated Researches Technics – ART, where a global reflection upon movement, sense, and sensation is in process. In July 2015, he was awarded the French medal of Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by Brigitte Lefevre of the Paris Opera Ballet. His work *What The Day Owes To The Night* was awarded presentation support from the New England Foundation for the Arts.

[cie-koubi.fr](http://cie-koubi.fr) (in French and English)

### **Samantha Speis**

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](http://urbanbushwomen.org/the-company)

### **Taja Will**

Taja Will is a queer, Chilean adoptee, performer, choreographer, therapist, and restorative justice facilitator based in the Twin Cities (MN). Her 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. She explores 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](http://tajawillartist.com)