

**The National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron**

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**NCCAkron Brings Together Two of the Nation's Premier Integrated Dance Companies  
for a Dancing Lab, November 17-24**

AKRON, Ohio —The **National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron** (NCCAkron) proudly announces Dancing Lab: Integrated Dance, happening this month in Cleveland, OH.

Dancing Labs are an innovative residency format that explores an issue or field-wide opportunity and creates space for professional artists to exchange their working knowledge around that idea. For Dancing Lab: Integrated Dance, dancers from **Dancing Wheels** (Cleveland, OH) and **AXIS Dance Company** (Oakland, CA) will be joined by choreographers **Tiffany Mills** (Brooklyn, NY) and **Nichole Canuso** (Philadelphia, PA) to explore choreographic ideas at Dancing Wheels' training center in midtown Cleveland.

Dancing Wheels and AXIS are among the premier arts and disabilities organizations in the United States. Dancing Wheels recently returned from its first tour to Beijing, China. AXIS held its home season in San Francisco last month before heading out on tour to Salt Lake City, UT, and Vienna, Austria. Canuso and Mills were chosen earlier this year from a national nomination and application process, designed and carried out by NCCAkron in collaboration with both companies.

"I am so excited for this company exchange with Dancing Wheels in collaboration with NCCAkron— it will be an opportunity for both companies to come together to share ideas in physically integrated dance and learn from each other. I am thrilled that the dancers will get to work with choreographers Tiffany Mills and Nichole Canuso and explore their creative process," says **Marc Brew**, Artistic Director of AXIS Dance Company.

Canuso says, "I'm very much looking forward to being in a collaborative space and in creative conversation with the artists of Axis Dance Company and Dancing Wheels Company. In a world that feels increasingly divisive, how can we can provide spaces for people with divergent life experiences to listen to one another's stories, to observe, experience themselves as being seen and heard, and to collaborate?"

As the second choreographic center of its kind in the country, NCCAkron has the unique opportunity to create proximity for creative investigation, NCCAkron Executive / Artistic Director **Christy Bolingbroke** explains. "We not only provide resources to develop new work, but also bring artists from different parts of the country to be in the studio together to experiment with new choreographic ideas. Developing something around integrated dance felt timely in particular. Here are two wildly prolific companies with 30+ years experience and up until last year they had never duplicated a choreographer between them. In fostering more physically integrated-savvy choreographers, what else can everyone operating in this aesthetic learn from each other?"

The Dancing Lab residencies are bigger than a single artist's next production, and represent a larger vision for the field to grow artistic excellence.

"It is my hope that the synergy and collaborative nature of this unique Dancing Lab will lend to the expansion and vision of physically integrated dance," says **Mary Verdi-Fletcher**, President/Founding Artistic Director of Dancing

Wheels. “The sharing of knowledge in a hands on exploration will undoubtedly be eye-opening for the dancers, choreographers and those who are considered leaders in this field of dance.”

### **About**

The National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron (NCCAkrón) 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 <https://www.nccakron.org/>.

### **Funding Credits**

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

This Dancing Lab specifically fostering the exploration and expansion of physically integrated dance is made possible with generous support from the Ford Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, and the Ohio Arts Council.

### **AXIS Dance Company**

AXIS Dance Company's Artistic Director **Marc Brew** and the performance company of dancers both with and without physical disabilities work to create an atmosphere with equal parts artistry, engagement and advocacy. Since their inception in 1987 AXIS has been at the forefront of the field, building a bridge between contemporary dance, integrated dance, and disability culture.

[axisdance.org](http://axisdance.org)

### **Dancing Wheels Company**

Dancing Wheels Company & School's President/Founding Artistic Director **Mary Verdi-Fletcher** is one of the country's first professional wheelchair dancers. Over the past 38 years Mary has constructed a company with a blend of stand-up and sit-down (wheelchair) dancers that travel the world spreading awareness while simultaneously entertaining their audiences.

[dancingwheels.org](http://dancingwheels.org)

**Nichole Canuso** is a Philadelphia-based choreographer, performer and teacher who has been working in the field for over 20 years. Nichole is committed to long-term development processes that enable relationship-building with artistic collaborators, community partners and audiences. Her work has been supported by The National Endowment for the Arts, The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, among others. Presentation of her work includes New York Live Arts, Los Angeles Performance Practice, HERE in New York, NY, ODC in San Francisco, CA and American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, MA. Commissions include American Philosophical Society Museum and Temple Institute on Disabilities. Residencies include Maggie Alessee National Center for Choreography in Tallahassee FL, The MacDowell Colony in Peterborough NH, Millay Colony in Austerlitz NY and Workshop Foundation in Budapest, Hungary. She is on faculty at the MFA program at Pig Iron School for Advance Performance Training (APT) at The University of the Arts. She is a 2017 Pew Fellow.

[nicholecanusodance.org](http://nicholecanusodance.org)

**Tiffany Mills** is choreographer and Artistic Director of the NYC-based Tiffany Mills Company (2000-pres). Recent NYC Seasons: The Flea as an “Anchor Partner”, La Mama, BAM Fisher via BAM/PDP. Past presentation: PICA/TBA

Festival (OR), Wexner Center (OH), Contemporary Dance Theater/NPN (OH), Jacob's Pillow/Inside Out (MA), Dance Place (DC), Austin Dance Festival (TX), Guggenheim/Works & Process, Duke on 42, Symphony Space, Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors, Bryant Park Dance Festival, Dancing in the Streets, Joyce SoHo, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Danspace Project's City/Dans, DTW, PS 122, Movement Research/Judson Church, TPAC, HERE, and in Russia, Italy, Mexico and Canada. Guest teaching: Trisha Brown Studios, DNA, Gibney, Peridance, The Playground, Earthdance (MA), Velocity (WA), Conduit (OR), ACDA, universities/festivals. Residencies: NYU's Tisch Summer Dance Festival, CUNY Dance Initiative, BAM PDP, Joyce/Mellon Anchor Tenant Program, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Dance New Amsterdam, Joyce, Field, LMCC Swing Space, HERE/HARP, TPAC/LMCC Space Grant. Awards: Bogliasco/Jerome Robbins Fellowships, Pentacle/Help Desk, Dance/NYC Artistic Advisory Board, ACDA Adjudicator, Bates Dance Festival Emerging Choreographer. Funding: ACC, Mertz Gilmore (via La MaMa), O'Donnell Green, Evelyn Sharp, Harkness (via HERE), LMCC/FFCC, DCA, BAC (JPMC, DCA, NYSCA, Destination Brooklyn), Bossak/Heilbron, Sorin Charitable Trust, Puffin, MCAF, Meet the Composer, American Music Center, and New Music/USA. Training: BA in dance (University of Oregon); MFA in choreography (Ohio State University). Influences: Trisha Brown (Brown mentored Mills on her choreography; Mills was on scholarship with TBDC and taught at Brown's Studio); Contact Improvisation and Partnering (Alito Alessi/DanceAbility); and Somatic modalities (Body Mind Centering, Bartenieff Fundamentals, and Klein Technique).

[tiffanymillscompany.org](http://tiffanymillscompany.org)

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