

**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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GROUNDWORKS DANCETHEATER SUMMER PERFORMANCE SERIES 2022

CLEVELAND, OH – GroundWorks DanceTheater returns to **Cain Park** and the **Heinz Poll Summer Dance Festival** for our **Summer Performance Series 2022**. The annual series will include live open-air performances of world-premiere works by rising star choreographer **Rena Butler**, a 2019 Princess Grace Award-Winner for Choreography, and GroundWorks own **Nicole Hennington's** first mainstage work for the company, **As I Am**. Also on the program will be an updated version of GroundWorks Executive Artistic Director David Shimotakahara's **Aperture**. The 2020 work was created as part of a two-year project with the Akron Art Museum in response to pieces in the museum's permanent collection.

GroundWorks DanceTheater's 18th annual performances at **Cain Park** take place **July 15-17** in the spacious Evans Amphitheater. We are thrilled to continue this annual summer tradition of bringing top-flight contemporary dance to this historic summer arts mecca in the heart of Cleveland Heights.

Our **Summer Performance Series 2022** then concludes on **August 5 and 6** as part of the **Heinz Poll Summer Dance Festival** at **Firestone Park** in Akron. The 48-year-old festival was created to honor the legacy of Heinz Poll, founding Artistic Director of the former Ohio Ballet, and continues to bring **free to the public** dance performances by respected Ohio dance companies and others to Akron area audiences and beyond. Supported by the City of Akron, GroundWorks has been a fixture at the Festival since 2007.

If you would like to set up interviews, need photos or press comp tickets, please contact me ASAP at steve@groundworksdance.org.

Tune into a FREE Virtual Artist Talk with Rena Butler on Wednesday, June 29 at 7 p.m. EDT as she talks live about her career, process, and new work for the company with host Christy Bolingbroke, the Executive/Artistic Director of The National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron. Visit <https://groundworksdance.org/portfolio-items/artist-talk-with-rena-butler/>

SUMMER PERFORMANCE SERIES 2022 DETAILS**CAIN PARK**

Friday, July 15 & Saturday, July 16 | 8 p.m.

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Sunday, July 17 | 2 p.m.
 Evans Amphitheater
 14591 Superior Rd, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118
 Advance Tickets: \$25
 Day of Show Tickets: \$30
<https://www.cainpark.com/438/GroundWorks-DanceTheater>

HEINZ POLL SUMMER DANCE FESTIVAL

Friday, August 5 & Saturday, August 6 | 8:45 p.m.
 Firestone Park
 1480 Girard St., Akron, OH 4430
 FREE
<http://akrondancefestival.org/>

For more information visit groundworksdance.org/summer2022

ABOUT RENA BUTLER

Rena hails from Chicago, IL. She began her studies at The Chicago Academy for the Arts, studied overseas at Taipei National University of the Arts in Taiwan, and received her BFA from SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Dance. Rena danced with companies including Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (also a choreographic fellow), AIM by Kyle Abraham, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, David Dorfman Dance, Manuel Vignouille/M-Motions, The Kevin Wynn Collection, Pasos Con Sabor Salsa Dance Company, among others. Currently, she dances for Gibney Company, and was recently named its Choreographic Associate.

She is a recipient of the prestigious 2019 Princess Grace Foundation Award for Choreography and created works for BalletX, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Charlotte Ballet, Boston Dance Theater, The New Orleans Museum of Modern Art in collaboration with Academy Award-Winning jazz composer, Terrence Blanchard, CHTV Stories television program in Switzerland, a film short in collaboration with Third Coast Percussion x Devonté Hynes/Blood Orange, The Young Choreographer's Festival in NYC, The Ailey/Fordham School, TEDxChicago Virtual Salon 3.0: Design Your Life, and more. She has been spotlighted in Dance Magazine's On The Rise feature in 2013, and the featured cover story in Dance Magazine's November 2021 issue.

Butler has taught dance and choreographic workshops at L'Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Danse de Marseille in France, The Macau Cultural Center in China, Ailey Camp Chicago, and SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Dance.

She served on the Consortium for Chicago Dancemakers Forum for 3 years, was on the annual panel for Black Girls Dance in Chicago, and co-created and directed DanceLab—a free, choreographic course for Chicago teens, empowering participants of varying socioeconomic backgrounds + identities to find commonality in creation. She currently serves on Dancewave's Artistic Advisory Council in NYC.

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In addition to creating a new work for GroundWorks DanceTheater, Butler will be a guest choreographer at Jacob's Pillow this summer, Norrdans in Sweden and the San Francisco Opera this fall, and will create her first work for The National Ballet of Canada celebrating the music of Grammy Award-winning composer John Adams for his 75th birthday that will premiere in March 2023.

ABOUT NICOLE HENNINGTON

Nicole (she/her) spent her first two decades in Arizona where she graduated from the University of Arizona with a BFA in Dance and a minor in Finance. During this time, she also studied with Nederlands Dans Theatre, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, chuthis., New Dialect, and Ate9. She has performed the works of choreographers Brian Brooks, Robyn Mineko Williams, James Gregg, Dianne McIntyre, Peter Chu, Jianhui Wang, Banning Bouldin, and Bella Lewitzky. Nicole also has a passion for teaching and has taught dance at Cleveland State University, The University of Akron, and dance studios in Northeast, Ohio and beyond. As a choreographer, she is a 2022 RAD FEST (Midwest Regional Alternative Dance) Screendance Selectee for her solo work, "Between Presence" in collaboration with videographer Cory Sheldon.

ABOUT DAVID SHIMOTAKAHARA

Executive Artistic Director David Shimotakahara founded GroundWorks in 1998, determined to challenge the preconceptions about dance. This desire to push boundaries is evident in Shimotakahara's bold initiative: To seek collaboration and input from guest choreographers of the highest caliber and to constantly evolve the repertoire of the company.

Over the past 15 years, GroundWorks has created and produced over 60 original works. Twenty-one of these have been commissioned from nationally and internationally renowned guest artists. In addition, Shimotakahara has contributed over 30 pieces to the company's rep. His work is about here and now. He is interested in framing issues surrounding individuality, privacy, place, and connectivity through movement that speaks through its musicality and physicality.

Shimotakahara's performance history includes: member of the Atlanta Ballet, Boston Repertory Ballet, Kathryn Posin Dance Company, and Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. He performed with Ohio Ballet under the direction of Heinz Poll from 1983-1999. He also served as Rehearsal Assistant for Ohio Ballet from 1989-1999. From 1989-97, Mr. Shimotakahara founded and was Director of New Steps. This acclaimed dance project offered a variety of programs that stimulated the creation and growth of new choreography in Northeast Ohio. Mr. Shimotakahara has choreographed for opera and theater with the Cleveland Opera, Great Lakes Theater Festival and the Dallas Theater Center. He served on the Carlisle Project advisory panel in 1996, and dance panels for the Ohio Arts Council, Illinois Arts Council, the Mid Atlantic Arts Alliance and the National Endowment for the Arts. He has received 7 Individual Artist Fellowships for Choreography from the Ohio Arts Council from 1996 to 2012. In 1998, he received a McKnight Foundation Fellowship from the Minnesota Dance Alliance to create new work in the Minneapolis, St. Paul communities. Mr. Shimotakahara was awarded the 2000 Cleveland Arts Prize for Dance. In 2002 his work



with GroundWorks DanceTheater was voted “One of 25 to Watch” by Dance Magazine. In 2007, he received the OhioDance award for Outstanding Contributions to the Advancement of the Dance Artform.

Mr. Shimotakahara was a 2008 recipient of the first COSE Arts and Business Innovation awards as the founder of GroundWorks DanceTheater. In 2010 Shimotakahara received a Creative Workforce Fellowship, a program of the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, funded by Cuyahoga Arts and Culture.

ABOUT GROUNDWORKS DANCETHEATER

GroundWorks DanceTheater, founded by David Shimotakahara in 1998, is a contemporary dance company located in Northeast Ohio. Now in our 23rd season, GroundWorks DanceTheater is continually pushing

the boundaries of what is possible through dance by engaging, educating, and enlivening our community. We are committed to presenting unique opportunities for engaging the community through work-in-progress showings, masterclasses, artist talks, and educational outreach to school age children, college students, and senior adults, along with the development and presentation of new choreography and collaborations.

The Northeast Ohio-based company performs new works by Executive Artistic Director, David Shimotakahara, as well as commissioned work by nationally & internationally acclaimed choreographers including Eric Michael Handman, Rosie Herrera, Kate Weare, Robert Moses, Ronen Koresh, Dianne McIntyre, Lynne Taylor-Corbett, Adam Barruch, Gina Gibney, David Parker, Brian Brooks, James Gregg, & many others.

GroundWorks DanceTheater is proud to be Cleveland State University’s Professional Dance Company in Residence

GroundWorks DanceTheater’s annual programming is made possible with funding from The National Endowment for the Arts, The Ohio Arts Council, Cuyahoga County residents through Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, The Cleveland Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Toby Devan Lewis Philanthropic Fund, GAR Foundation, Peg’s Foundation, The John P. Murphy Foundation, The Kulas Foundation, Akron Community Foundation, The Demetros Charitable Trust, The Mary S. and David C. Corbin Foundation, The Judith Gerson Fund, Sisler McFawn, Individual Contributors & Members of the GroundWorks Board of Directors.

For more information, please visit www.groundworksdance.org or call 216-751-0088.

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