# DANCE NEWS 2022

SlipperyRock University of Pennsylvania

## YEAR AT A GLANCE

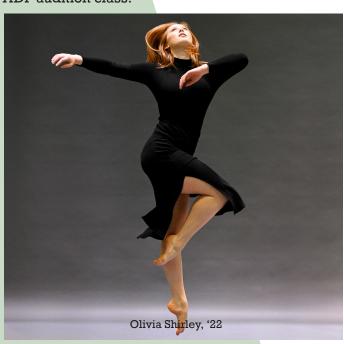
#### AMERICAN COLLEGE DANCE ASSOCIATION



During the beautiful spring week of March 16-19, Slippery Rock University hosted the American College Dance Association Mid-Atlantic North (ACDAman)

conference. After two years without an in-person gathering in our region, we celebrated dance by welcoming 14 schools and 200 dancers from the region and beyond to fill our spaces with creative energy! The conference theme was "Coming to Our Senses" and centered on the power of sensorial experience to assist artists in navigating a shifting pandemic landscape.

The conference offered a wide array of aesthetics through our visiting faculty and our invited guests such as Kizuna Dance (Nagare Technique), Mark Taylor (somatics), Attack Theatre (professional company from Pittsburgh), Teena Marie Custer (professional street dance artist), Jaya Mani (Bharatanatyam), and African drum musician Ketan Bakrania. 65 classes were offered in all, plus an ADF audition class.





The Conference featured seven concerts in just three days: the opening concert, three adjudication concerts, one gala concert, one shared faculty/screendance concert, and one informal concert. 40 Slippery Rock University student volunteers worked beautifully and tirelessly to bring these concerts to fruition. Slippery Rock University's piece, "The Shade," choreographed by Teena Marie Custer, was selected for the Gala Concert.

Gracing the stage for the Opening Concert was Kizuna Dance, with nine members from New York City. The program featured Kizuna's distinct floor work and was inspired by the Japanese idea of "ichigo ichie, a Japanese concept denoting the uniqueness of every interpersonal encounter." The artistic director of the company, Cameron McKinney, also performed his signature solo, "E.X.P.L.O.D.E." The concert was made possible by generous sponsorship by the SRU Frederick Douglass Institute which prioritizes programming by diverse artists and scholars.

Let's not forget our closing pizza party, including Soul Line Dancing by our very own Ursula Payne, that was a release of positive energy!

### NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF DANCE

The SRU Department of Dance had its 10-year accreditation visit as part of the National Association of Schools of Dance accreditation cycle. Founded in 1981, the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) is an organization of schools, conservatories, colleges, and universities with approximately 83 accredited institutional members. It establishes national standards for undergraduate and graduate degrees and other credentials for dance and dance-related disciplines and provides assistance to institutions and individuals engaged in artistic, scholarly, educational, and other dance-related endeavors (https://nasd.arts-accredit.org). Slippery Rock University has been an accredited member of NASD since 2000.

### FORGE SUMMER DANCE INTENSIVE

This past summer, SRU's FORGE Summer Dance Intensive, directed by Professor Lindsay Viatori, was re-launched after a two-year hiatus due to Covid-19. Faculty from across the country taught for the two-week intensive which was held July 9-22nd. Five SRU Dance majors participated as interns assisting Viatori in areas such as production, social media, student liaisons, guest teachers' assistants, demonstrators, and others.

### SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY DANCE THEATRE (SRUDT)

Adjudicated dance pieces involving over sixty dancers were featured at the Fresh Moves Concert and the Emerging Choreographers Concert in the 2021-2022 season. Concerts took place in our newly renovated Miller Theater and Stoner West Studio Theater.

### PALENQUE: COLOMBIAN DANCE ENSEMBLE



The Department of Dance's residential company, Palenque had a busy year performing for on and off-campus

events that included performances at Youngstown State University, Passavant Senior Living Center, Center, and Slippery Rock Village Fest. Additionally, Palenque was invited to perform at the Diversity and Inclusion Conference at Clarion University of PA, was featured at the August Wilson Center for African American Culture's Community Day, and presented an educational lecture-concert for SRU's concert for SRU's FORGE Summer Dance Intensive. In the spring of 2022, Palengue members visited the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington DC where they examined the strong presence of the African element in the development of Art and Society in the Americas including Latin America. Professor Melissa Teodoro has been artistic director of Palengue since 2012 and continues to research, reconstruct, create, write, and present her ongoing investigation of dances of Colombia. Palengue auditions will be held in the spring of 2023.





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### **GUEST ARTISTS 2021-22**

The Department of Dance was thrilled to commission a new work by **Teena Marie Custer** for incoming and transfer students. Teena Marie shared her signature aesthetic in the creation of *The Shade* which was performed throughout the year in the SRU Dance Performance Season, as well as an adjudicated piece at ACDA Mid-Atlantic North conference where it had the honor of being selected for the Gala Concert. In the public comment section, adjudicator Leah Cox shared that "This is what an inclusive space looks like" and adjudicator Chad Hall praised it as "solidarity and individuality celebrated together."

Artistic Director Cameron McKinney of Kizuna Dance challenged students with his artistry and movement vocabulary in the creation of his innovative "Furrowed," a piece that showcased complex floor work inspired by release work, contemporary technique, house, breaking, and capoeira. "Furrowed" was performed throughout the year and represented the department in the ACDAman Informal Concert. We were thrilled to welcome back SRU alumna Malena Maust (SRU 2018 and Kizuna Dance company member), who participated in the residency as McKinney's assistant. This residency was co-sponsored by the Frederick Douglass Institute and its collaborative work with academic departments to infuse Diversity, Equity and Inclusion activities into the curriculum.



Professor Jesse Factor and visiting Graham regisseur, Elizabeth Auclair, worked with students to stage Martha Graham's classic and powerful Steps in the Street from Graham's 1936 work titled Chronicle. 24 students participated in this exceptional opportunity to learn about Graham's protest against war and fascism in Europe.

Nina Martin returned to Slippery Rock University for a second year in a row, this time face to face. Martin shared her systems called Ensemble Thinking and Re/Wire Movement States with the first-year improvisation classes.

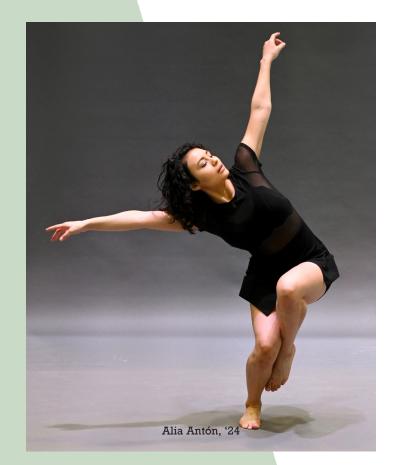




Dance alumna, **Lashonda Johnson** was commissioned to create a dance for the BFA senior concert. Her piece, *Return to Sender*, was a highly physical dance that showcased the exceptional technical and performance abilities of the BFA dancers. "I wanted to create a dance that helped to lead us out of the isolation of the pandemic and restore a sense of community and caring for one another (Johnson)." This residency was cosponsored by the Frederick Douglass Institute.

David Skeele, Professor of Theatre, conducted master classes for dance majors in Foundation Training, which is a series of body-weight exercises that activates the posterior muscle chain, anchors the hips, decompresses the spine, and takes the burden of supporting the body out of the joints. The dance majors enjoyed this unique way of exercising and retraining the body.

Alumni Samantha Baker, Jennifer Blankenship, Sarah DiFrischia, Jenna Hanlon, Ryan McMullen, Carrie Languth, and Darrin Mosley shared their career paths and experiences with Senior Capstone dance majors.





### GUEST ARTISTS IN RESIDENCY 2021-22

Cameron McKinney, September 2021
Teena Marie Custer, September 2021
Elizabeth Eauclair, March 2022
LaShonda Johnson, March 2022
Nina Martin, April 2022
Helen Simoneau, September 2022

### OTHER GUEST ARTISTS/LECTURERS

**Alejandro Pinzon**, Lecture and Master class in Argentinean Tango

Shivaun Corry and Ilcan Fidanli, Lecture and master class in dances from Turkey

**Nicole Dann-Payne**, Lecture in nutrition, wellness and mental health



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#### **INTERNSHIPS**

**Tyler Anderson**: School of American Ballet through Americans for the Arts' selective Diversity in Arts Leadership (DIAL) internship program (NY)

**Taylor Andrekanic**: Palenque: Colombian Dance Ensemble (PA)

Jordan Allen: Forge Dance Intensive Program (PA)

**Anna DeRubeis**: Forge Dance Intensive Program (PA)

Cassandra Dietrich: Forge Dance Intensive Program (PA)

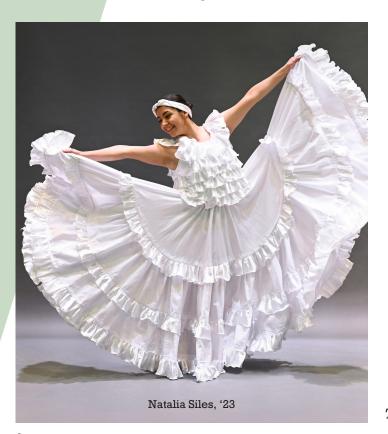
Erin Brod: Walt Disney World Resort (FL)

**Kelvin Rodriguez**: Palenque: Colombian Dance Ensemble (PA)

Natalia Siles: The Quechee Club, Recreation/Dance Internship (VT)

Kaylee Smith: Forge Dance Intensive Program (PA)

**Hayden Summers**: Forge Dance Intensive Program (PA)





### LUCY ISACCO SACK SCHOLARSHIPS

Academic Year Scholarship: Natalia Siles,
Gabrielle Dunn, Alicea Chludzinski
Freshman/Transfer Scholarship: Samantha Oliver
Diversity Scholarship: Tyler Anderson
Intensive Program Scholarship: Gianna Henriquez,
Samantha Oliver

#### **2022 SENIOR AWARDS**

Outstanding BFA: Skylar Smith
Outstanding BA: Elena Turner
Outstanding Minor: Ella Hickey
Outstanding Choreographer: Olivia Shirley
Outstanding Performer: Isabel Farr
Outstanding Teacher: Vanessa Adams
Outstanding Researcher: Anna DeRubeis
Outstanding Service: Kelvin Rodriguez
Outstanding Technology: Ashlin Broody-Walega
Thom and Christine Cobb Award: Kaitlin Yankovich



### on UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH (NCUR)

Research papers from the following senior students were presented at the NCUR 2022 conference.

Resistance Training: An Effective Means for Injury Prevention in Dance By **Jade Daniels** (mentor: Melissa Teodoro)

The Examination of Cultural Insensitivity
in the Nutcracker's "Chinese Tea."
By Anna DeRubeis (mentor: Melissa Teodoro)

Gaga: Finding an Authentic Language from Within By Isabel Farr\* (mentor: Melissa Teodoro)

Pina Bausch: A Visceral Approach to Creating Narrative in Dance By **Faythe Lewis** (mentor: Melissa Teodoro)

Creating a Safe Dance Environment that Honors
Mental and Physical Health Through Ruth Zaporah's
"Action Theater" and Improvisation Practices
By Olivia Shirley\* (mentor: Melissa Teodoro)

\*Olivia Shirley and Isabel Farr also presented their research papers at the SRU Research Symposium.

### OTHER SCHOLARSHIPS

 $SRU\ Incoming\ Freshman\ Scholarship:$  Aleah Bednarz

Graduates of the Late 60's Scholarship: Gianna Henriquez

Rising Sophomore Scholarship (NHSDA): Skylar Ankrom

Student Employee of the Year Award was given to **Alicea Chludzinski** in the spring of 2022. This award was sponsored by the Office of Student Engagement and Leadership and presented to Alicea in its annual Rising Star Student Involvement Awards.

The Norton Undergraduate Research Scholarship was awarded to **Natalia Siles** and **Andrés Ortiz** who are developing a research based on the historic Bolivian dance, *Huayño Cochabambino* under the mentorship of Professor Melissa Teodoro.

The prestigious, Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Foundation Scholarship (PMAHCCF) was awarded to Natalia Siles.





### **OFF-CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS**

Taylor Andrekanic, Kelvin Rodriguez and Skylar Smith traveled with professor, Melissa Teodoro to assist her in a residency at St. Olaf College (MN) in the fall of 2021.

**Autumn B-C** and **Zsuzsanna Smith** performed two Bharatanatyam dances - Naritta and Alarippu at the Sri Venkateswara Temple under the mentorship of professor Jaya Mani.

Auriana Carrington, Austin Shaffer and Skylar Smith presented their choreographic works at the Koresh Artist Showcase in Philadelphia in the spring of 2022. Performers included Olivia Blankenship, Auriana Carrington, Anna DeRubeis, Gabbie Dunn, Kaitlin Halushka, Austin Shaffer, Skylar Smith and Will VanSlander.

Gianna Henriquez and Natalia Siles attended Critical Mass: CI@50 at Oberlin College (OH). Jennifer Keller, and alumni Rosie Trump (class of 2003) and Kari Hoglund (class of 2021) were also in attendance.

**Kaylee Smith** attended a 4-week intensive program at the Gibney (NY)

The Frederick Douglass Institute and the Department of Dance co-sponsored a field trip to Pittsburgh's Byham Theatre for dance majors to attend the Kyle Abraham dance concert.

Alumna, **Luvenia Kalia**'s film was accepted into the national ACDA Screendance Gala.

#### SRU RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

Research papers from the following senior students were accepted to be presented at the 2022 SRU Research Symposium.

• Cultural Inclusivity and Anatomical Safety in the Horton Technique By Taylor Andrekanic (mentor, Lindsay Viatori)

• Finding an Alternate Approach to Narrative and a New Aesthetic in the Creation of Dances for the Screen By Ashlin Broody-Walega (mentor, Melissa Tedodoro)

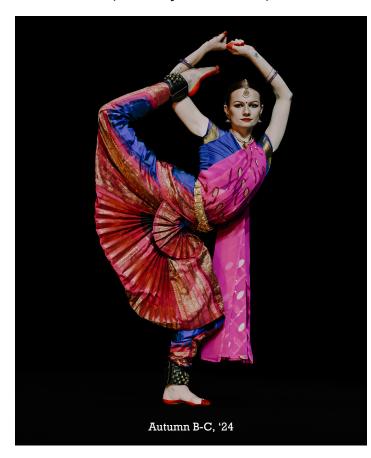
• From Ballet Barres to Barbells: Strengthen Training for Dancers. By Kaitlin Falce (mentor, Lindsay Viatori)

• Ritual, Symbolism and an Archaic Depiction of Marriage in Nijinska's Les Noces By Skylar Smith (mentor, Melissa Teodoro)

• Embracing the Conflict and the Aesthetic of the Cool While Promoting Jazz Dance as a Foundational Technique in Dance Education By Kaitlin Yankovich (mentor, Melissa Teodoro)

The Utilization of Improvisation in Dance Choreography

By: Olivia Shirley and Kaitlin Yankovich (mentor, Jennifer Keller)





Olivia Barner, BFA Class of 2021, recently taught as a dance instructor at The Pennsylvania Dance Company in Sharon, PA. She also choreographed and set numerous solo and group works on dancers ages 3-18 for competitive and recreational performances in addition to working as a fitness and wellness coach at Evolve Training in Sharon, PA. Barner also performed a self-choreographed solo work in Koresh Dance Company's Summer Series Artist Showcase in addition to performing a solo work by Jennifer Keller in SRU's Faculty and Guest Artist Concert as an alumni in the Fall of 2021.

Alyssa Cubellis, B.A., graduated from SRU in 2013 with a B.A. in Dance. Since graduation, she has remained in dance education with local studios. Alyssa currently shares her love for dance with students at Center Stage Dance Academy in Pittsburgh, Pa where she has been a teacher, assistant company director, and social media coordinator. When she is not in the studio, you can find her at Allegheny General Hospital as a Vascular Ultrasound Technologist.

Hannah Guidry, B.A., graduated from SRU in 2013 with a Dance Major. After graduation, she returned to DFW where she danced with and choreographed for Cholorock Dance Collective and ImPULSE Dance Project. During that time, she pursued and obtained her Texas Teaching Certificate and worked as an elementary and middle school teacher. She now resides in El Paso, TX with her husband and 2 pets. Currently, she is in the process of completing her 200 hour Yoga Teacher Certification at Surya Yoga and plans to begin her 300 hour training in October.

Luvenia Kalia, B.F.A., graduated from SRU in 2020 with a B.F.A in dance. In her final year, she was hired as an Arts and Culture producer with a company based in Australia and Asia. She moved back home to Malaysia where she is currently still holds her position as an Arts and Culture producer and engages in Arts education for underprivilege community kids. Luvenia actively collaborates as a dancer with other artists of diverse disciplines in performance making for both stage and film

Darrin Mosley has done a lot since graduating in 2017 from SRU with a BA in Dance and a minor in Theatre; shortly after, he reproduced a senior dance concert in York, Pa entitled "The Open Dialogue." He also worked in multiple acting roles Pittsburgh for companies such as New Horizon Theater Company (Sassy Mamas 2022), Pittsburgh Musical Theater Company (Newsies 2019), Steel City Shakespeare (Hamlet 2018), and South Park Theater (25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee (2019) in addition to his dance role in "Moby Dick the Opera"

2019 in conjunction with Attack Theatre Dance Company. He was then hired full time as a teaching artist with Attack Theatre Dance in November 2019. Recently, Mosley was nominated and won silver Telly award for Best Remote Production (A Very Covid Christmas 2021). Currently, he is enrolled in the Graduate Theater Program at the University of Louisville as a Graduate Teaching Assistant and student.

Cassidy Negri, B.F.A., M.S., graduated from SRU in 2018 with a B.F.A in dance and in 2019 with a M.S. in Adapted Physical Activity. Currently, Cassidy is the Founder and Program Director of iCANdance, an adaptive dance program that provides classes to the local special needs community, provides mentoring to upcoming professionals in the field, researches, and writes about the growing field of adaptive dance. She also works at her hometown studio teaching dance and works as a barre instructor.

Felice Rose graduated from SRU amidst the pandemic in 2020 with her BFA in Dance: Performance and Choreography concentration. After graduating, Felice moved to New Hampshire for the summer to perform for RWS Entertainment at Storyland. Shortly after her time there, Felice was then hired as a Resident Artist at English Musicals Korea where she spent over a year living in South Korea, creating and performing musicals for schools all over the country. She has recently returned from South Korea and is preparing for her next performance journey in NYC.

Michelle Slavik graduated in 2018 from Slippery Rock University with a B.F.A. in Dance with concentrations in Performance & Choreography and Business Administration. Michelle is currently a Philadelphia based dance artist performing with choreographer Hilary Pearson in the 2022 premiere of HAIR in Philadelphia's Cannonball Festival. Michelle has also danced for Megan Bridge's Fidget, Keila Cordova's dance company, 3 Pony Show, as well as Kalila Kingsford Smith's I Spy apart of the 2019 Philadelphia Fringe Festival. Michelle has presented her own work at Leah Stein Dance Company's Studio Works, SpringUp Dance Festival, Small Plates Dance Festival, Kun-Yang Lin/Dancer's InHale Series and Koresh Dance Company's Artist Showcase.

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## FACULTY SPOTLIGHTS

Andy Hasenpflug continues to serve as Music Director for the American Dance Festival (ADF). This past year he collaborated with varied artist such as Jesse Factor on the ongoing series, "Show Queen;" Helanius Wilkins on his Conversation Series performances; and Ursula Payne whose repertory artistic creation was featured by WSRUTV. Andy additionally performed with choreographers and performers Kate Jewett, Adam Crawley, Matt Dixon, Khalid Saleem, Jesse Young, and West Oxking.



Nora Ambrosio spent the summer writing the 9th edition of her book Learning about Dance: Dance as an Art Form and Entertainment, published by Kendall Hunt Publishing Company. Learning about Dance is used in courses nationwide and in Canada and has sold over 400,000 copies. She recently choreographed three dances for the 2022 Faculty and Guest Artists Dance Concert. The dances, titled Going, Going, Gone, Follow the Sun, and Don't let it get you down, were created as part of a repertory class in spring 2022. Nora is a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD). She continues to serve as a site visitor for NASD and as a Presidential Appointee for the Commission on Accreditation.

As of 2022, **Jaya Mani** has conducted a total of 126 Arangetrams which are a culmination of over 10 years of training in the Bharata Natyam classical Indian dance genre. Arangetrams are solo concerts where Mani intensively works with individual students in preparation for this very important event. She has prepared students for Arengetrams in the Pittsburgh area for the past 40 years. Under her guidance, Mani's talented students performed in various events this past year such as Sanskrit Day, Dhirana (intercollegiate Bharata Natyam dance competitions), Mother's Day Celebration, University of Pittsburgh, among others.

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Jennifer Keller had the honor of returning to Oberlin College in July 2022, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Contact Improvisation, approximately 25 years after her first visit in 1997 during CI25. As part of the festivities, Jennifer, along with three other co-curators, including Rosie Trump (SRU class of 2003), curated an evening of contemporary films that considered CI in diverse and expansive cinematic ways. Keller also re-visited her improvisation roots in the creation of "Double Bubble Tumbleweed," a duet choreographed through improvisational processes for senior BFA students Olivia Shirley and Kaitlin Yankovich. Keller continues to work on a teaching certification in Ensemble Thinking with Nina Martin and Lower Left. Her quartet titled Second Thoughts was invited to perform at the Cleveland Dance Festival in the fall of 2021 and her film titled Sweet Sense was accepted into the national ACDA Screendance Gala, In March, Jennifer was humbled to be recognized with a Women and Ally of Distinction Award presented by colleague Lindsay Viatori and the President's Commission for Women.



## FACULTY SPOTLIGHTS

Melissa Teodoro was in residency at St. Olaf College (MN) in the fall of 2021 where she lectured, taught master classes, and set a Colombian dance piece on the college's Vaselica Dance Company. In the spring of 2022, she presented a research paper at the International Conference on Global Diversity in Higher Education at Clarion University of PA. Teodoro closely mentored senior students who presented their research papers at the National Council for Undergraduate Research (NCUR), SRU's Research Symposium, and Dance on Paper. In March of 2021, she traveled with 12 students to Washington DC to visit the Museum of African American History and Culture where they examined the strong influence of African cultures in the development of life, society and art in the Americas. In the summer of 2022, Teodoro and 9 dance majors were invited to perform at the August Wilson Center for African American Culture where they presented 5 dance pieces from the Palenque repertoire. In the summer of 2022, she traveled to Colombia to research the Bambuco Santafereño. There, she worked with archivists at the Bartolome Calvo Library, dance faculty at the Universidad de Cartagena, and a historic costume designer. She set the newly reconstructed Bambuco Santafereño on 9 dancers in August of 2022. This new piece will be a part of the 2022-23 Palenque repertoire and will be performed in various venues throughout the academic year.

Ursula Payne has moved into a new role for the academic year. She is located in Old Main and is the Associate Provost for Academic Finance, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives. Though she misses her Dance family tremendously, her background in the arts informs her mindful approach for understanding the nuances of Academic Affairs. Payne is still fueled by her passion and first love Dance! She has two choreographic commissions this year from Point Park University's Conservatory Dance Company and The Hill Dance Academy in Pittsburgh. Since Payne considers herself a lifelong learner, she will sit for her qualifying exams in January 2023. The PHD qualifying exam is an important benchmark in the marathon towards obtaining candidacy as a doctoral student.

Lindsay Viatori currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors for Helen Simoneau Danse (HSD). Lindsay was a founding member of this dance company and was part of the creation of many works during her eight years as a company member. She will travel with HSD this Fall and Spring, serving as the rehearsal director for Simoneau's latest work Delicate Power. She received a Faculty Student Research Grant to fund bringing Simoneau to SRU to restage her work Paper Wings on SRU Dance majors and minors. This guest artist residency will take place September 1-11th and will be performed in all SRU mainstage performances. Students will also present research on Paper Wings at the 2023 SRU Student Research Symposium. She has also recently been elected to the American College Dance Association Mid-Atlantic North Region Board of Directors where she also serves on a nation committee focusing on ACDA's social media presence. She is excited to re-enter into her performing career after recovering from an Achilles rupture surgery and has been invited to perform in a new ballet choreographed by Iyun Harrison based on the novel "Giovanni's Room" by James Baldwin. This project will happen in August of 2023. She is currently working with master Pilates instructor, Ellie Kusner, to organize SRU's second Mat Certification cohort which will be available to all SRU students and alumni. She is the Artistic Director of Slippery Rock University Dance Theatre (SRUDT) with assistance from student directors Natalia Siles and Ericka Morton. This year, there are thirty-eight choreographers creating fifty-one works for SRUDT! This past summer, FORGE Summer Dance Intensive was finally re-launched after a two-year hiatus due to Covid-19. Faculty from across the country taught for the two-week intensive which was held July 9-22nd.

#### **NEW FACULTY 2022-23**

We are thrilled to have Andrew Blight, Teena Marie Custer, Gretchen Hurd and Ryan McMullen (shown below) as temporary faculty for the 2022-23 academic year. Students and faculty welcome them to our department and are eager to work side by side with them.



Andrew Blight



Teena Marie Custer



Gretchen Hurd



Ryan McMullen



#### NEWSLETTER CREDITS

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