



# GROUNDWORKS

DANCE THEATER

## ABOUT GROUNDWORKS

GroundWorks DanceTheater is IMAGINATION YOU CAN SEE. Critically celebrated as an “artistically significant” ensemble, GroundWorks explores the nuances of the human experience through unique and adventurous choreography. This exciting, eclectic work brings audiences face-to-face with fresh, fascinating performances of passion, intellect and humor.

From its Northeast Ohio base, this group of outstanding artists has introduced dance lovers and neophytes alike to an experience that is unconventional, yet deeply human and resonating. From performing in unusual settings, collaborating with composers of new music, and featuring live musicians onstage, GroundWorks enriches its work with subtle layers of meaning that deepen the impact and enjoyment for the audience.

GroundWorks’ repertoire includes works by selected guest choreographers and interdisciplinary artists. GroundWorks has commissioned 21 premieres from nationally and internationally acclaimed choreographers — some of the most creative voices in the field — as well as 30 new works by Shimotakahara and 10 by Artistic Associate Amy Miller.

GroundWorks believes in developing its repertoire with work that challenges the range of its exceptional artists and in establishing a working relationship with guest choreographers interested in creating new work with the group. It is also interested in creating an audience that supports this work, through an understanding of its influences and sources built over time and learned from a variety of experiences with GroundWorks.

Additionally, GroundWorks is committed to enriching the community through inspiring education outreach programs for which it has been recognized with funding from the Ohio Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts.

By never settling, by stretching even its own definition of what’s possible in dance, the company, now in its 15th season, continues to grow and attract new audiences.

In January 2002, *Dance Magazine* named Shimotakahara “one of the year’s 25 to watch” in the dance world, and Wilma Salisbury from *The Plain Dealer* described the company as “setting the standard for small dance ensembles in Northeast Ohio.” In 2003, Steven Sucato wrote in the March issue of *Dance*, “With this program, GroundWorks DanceTheater reached a landmark of its own development, moving it ever closer to becoming one of the country’s leading contemporary dance companies.” *Cleveland Scene* voted GroundWorks, “Cleveland’s Best Dance Company” in 2008.

In 2009 GroundWorks celebrated its 10th anniversary season and the company’s New York City debut was a smash success. NY critic Chris Atamian described the experience as a “unique mixture of subtle humor, intelligent choreography, and vigorous movement.” In May 2009 *Northern Ohio LIVE* honored GroundWorks with a Special Award of Achievement for its 10 years of innovative cultural contribution to the region.

Now in its second decade, GroundWorks looks toward its future, having earned solid support and a growing audience base as more and more people discover what Donald Rosenberg in *The Plain Dealer* has described as the “smoldering brilliance” of one of “Cleveland’s cultural gems.”





## DAVID SHIMOTAKAHARA, EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Executive Artistic Director David Shimotakahara founded GroundWorks in 1998, determined to challenge his own preconceptions about dance. Under Shimotakahara's direction, GroundWorks has continually looked for ways to deepen the experience of dance. This philosophy informs choices which in addition to content, influence how the company produces and where. The company has made frequent use of non traditional venues, galleries, churches, and vacant industrial sites. There is a commitment to new music collaboration, working with new composers and live accompaniment. This desire to extend creative boundaries is evident in Shimotakahara's ongoing 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 the Pittsburgh

Ballet Theater. He performed with Ohio Ballet under the direction of Heinz Poll from 1983-1998. He also served as Rehearsal Assistant for Ohio Ballet from 1989-1998. From 1989-97, Mr. Shimotakahara co-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.



## COMPANY BIOS

**AMY MILLER** (Artistic Associate) is a founding member and the artistic associate of GroundWorks DanceTheater. A former member of the Ohio Ballet, she holds a BFA in dance and was awarded a 2010 Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award for her choreography. Since relocating to NYC in the fall of 2010, her choreography has been seen at Triskelion Arts, Spoke the Hub, and Gibney Dance Center as well as in commissions from Cleveland State University and GroundWorks DanceTheater. Her ongoing collaboration with Oberlin College composer Peter Swendsen brought *Running to Earth* to GroundWorks last season and continued this spring with a



premiere at NYC's Scandinavia House, home to the American-Scandinavian Foundation. This fall, Miller will present an extended solo work entitled *Trust the Future as Little as Possible* at Spoke the Hub's Space at Gowanus Arts in Brooklyn. Upcoming performing projects include Doug Varone's *Les Troyens* at the Metropolitan Opera, Gibney Dance and in the work of Brian Carey Chung.



**FELISE BAGLEY** (Dancer) debuted with GroundWorks DanceTheater in 2001 and has been performing, collaborating and creating with the company ever since. Ms. Bagley is a native New Yorker who began her dance training with Willa Damien, former soloist with Bejart Ballet of the 20th Century. Felise continued her training as a merit scholarship

recipient to the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center and the Joffrey Ballet School in NYC where she was privileged to perform as a guest artist for both of their professional companies. Felise has danced professionally with the Joyce Trisler Dance Company, Philadanco, Elise Monte Dance Company, Joffrey II, Festival Ballet of Rhode Island and Ohio Ballet. Felise has worked in both TV and film, and is featured in the book, "The Joffrey Ballet School's Ballet Fit."



### **NOELLE COTLER**

(Dancer) began her dance training at her mother's studio, Images In Dance, in Batavia, NY at the age of 2. While

attending high school Noelle had the opportunity to study at Jacobs Pillow and New York State Summer School of the Arts, (NYSSA) as well as several other intensives on the east coast. She then went on to receive her BFA in dance at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia PA, with honors in outstanding ballet performance. In 2011 Noelle traveled to Venice, Italy where she participated in *Arsenale Della Danza*, a professional program under the direction of Ismael Ivo. She has performed in Brazil, Poland, Italy and across the United States and has worked with artists such as Roni Koresh, Douglas Becker, Francesca Harper, Fernando Muchado, Marion Ballester and John Leher. This is Noelle's first season with GWDT.



### **DAMIEN HIGHFIELD**

(Dancer) came to Ohio from Atlanta Ballet. Mr. Highfield began dancing at the age of six in his hometown of Columbus, where he trained at Ballet Met for ten years, then became

a member of BalletMet/JazzMet. Mr. Highfield then went to Butler University in Indianapolis. Mr. Highfield has performed as a guest artist with Indianapolis Opera, Columbus Opera, Alexandra Ballet, Fort Wayne Ballet and the Academy of Ballet Arts. Mr. Highfield has danced the title role in *Hamlet*, *Dracula*, *Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Coppelia*, *Cinderella*, the pas de deux in *Alonzo King's Between Heaven and Earth*, as well as many works by David Shimotakahara and Jeffrey Graham Hughes. He was a featured choreographer for Ohio Ballet's *Roots of Choreography* and has also created a full length ballet, *The Toymaker*.



## COMPANY BIOS (CONTINUED)



**GARY LENINGTON** (Dancer) is thankful to have had the privilege of training with Ms. Nan Klinger and the Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet. A former soloist with both Richmond Ballet and Ballet Florida, he also appeared in the leading role of Thierry Malandain's *The Stone Flower* at the Le Temps D'Aimer international dance festival held

in Biarritz, France. Over the years he has performed a wide range of classical and contemporary roles including Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* and Iago from Jose Limon's *The Moor's Pavane*, and has been featured in works by Lar Lubovitch, Trey McIntyre, Val Caniparoli, Danny Ezralow, Mauricio Wainrot, Peter Martins, Margo Sappington, Twyla Tharp, Sean Lavery, Ma Cong, Malcolm Burn and Colin Conner.



**ANNIKA SHEAFF** (Dancer) earned a BFA from The Juilliard School where she received the Interarts Award for her community outreach work. Upon graduation, she immediately toured the world for 4 years with Pilobolus Dance Theater. Annika collaborated on *James and the Giant Peach*, a musical directed by Graciela Daniele

in 2010. She has worked with artists Jonathan Wolken, Inbal Pinto, Avshalom Pollak, Ohad Naharin, Paul Taylor, Basil Twist, Dan Zanes, Art Spiegelman, OKGO, and Radiolab. In 2011, Sheaff toured America with Aszure Barton and Artists. She has taught Pilobolus workshops and master classes all over the world. Annika has worked commercially with Sesame Street, America's Got Talent, *Dance Magazine*, and Extra! Choreography continues to be a creative outlet; she has shown her work in Chicago, New York City, Florida, and South Africa. 2012 brings Annika to GroundWorks, and she could not be more thrilled.

[www.annikasheaff.com](http://www.annikasheaff.com)



## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS

GroundWorks is committed to enriching the quality of the exchange between its artists and the communities it serves, as well as developing future audiences for dance in general. We currently offer programs wherever we perform throughout the Northeast Ohio region. GroundWorks is focusing much of its efforts on youth (grades 3-12) and their lack of exposure to dance, dance artists and the dance-making process itself to encourage and increase their potential as future young audiences. GroundWorks has developed an effective format that combines initial in-school workshops with opportunities to experience dance in performance, and offers ways to involve the participants in interactive learning with company artists. All of the learning activities of our unique program are designed to achieve arts and literacy benchmarks based on State of Ohio Standards.

In our workshops, students learn to identify basic dance elements through physical experience. These include the use of space, direction, level, speed, shapes and size. They are encouraged to experiment with changes by manipulating these basic elements. The concept of making creative choices and challenging oneself is reinforced throughout this learning. Then, with the assignment of basic compositional tasks, they are given opportunities to apply their new knowledge, working in small groups to create original dances. Through this process, students begin to understand the application of dance principals and tools. They are also activating and experiencing important life skills such as cooperation, trust, respect, sensitivity, awareness, reaction, coordination and teamwork.

Education Outreach Coordinator Mark Otloski is a native of Flint, Michigan and a former principal dancer of 22 years with the Cleveland/San Jose ballet under the direction of Dennis Nahat. Mr. Otloski was also a performing artist for 7 years with GroundWorks DanceTheater. As educational outreach coordinator for GroundWorks Mark works to provide access and opportunities for students throughout the greater Cleveland and Akron school districts to participate in artistic engagements with the artists of GroundWorks. A teaching artist for many years in the Art is Education initiative, Mark was recognized with the 2010 YANEO Sunshine Award in recognition of his commitment to arts education in the greater Cleveland community. An accomplished teacher, Mr. Otloski also teaches extensively throughout the greater Cleveland area and is currently on the faculty of Cleveland City Dance.



## EXCERPTS FROM REVIEWS

"Marked by an amazing cohesion of style, spirit and attention to detail, Shimotakahara's company has taken the regional dance world by an intense — yet ever graceful — storm."

**JENNIFER ROGERS**, [ArtsinOhio.com](http://ArtsinOhio.com)

"A seamless blend of classical and modern ideas that embrace artistic freshness..."

**DON ROSENBERG**, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*

"It's hard not to gush about GroundWorks. Its double trio of men and women dancers worked seamlessly as an ensemble so that the audience was able to concentrate on the dance story or vision being portrayed rather than particular personalities. One rarely sees repetition in their works; if it's there, it's special and exacting. These attributes, grouped with many others, make GroundWorks a leading and consequential force in the modern dance world."

**ROGER DURBIN**, *Westside Leader & Dance Critics Association*

"An avalanche of ideas takes flight — or hugs the earth — whenever GroundWorks steps onto a stage."

**DON ROSENBERG**, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*

"GroundWorks DanceTheater is one the area's best dance companies. Its talented and well-trained corps work as a cohesive group, displaying total awareness of the needs of contemporary dance to create segment after segment of audience pleasing performances."

**ROY BERKO**, [Coolcleveland.com](http://Coolcleveland.com)



## REFERENCES

### ERIN CAMERON

Cain Park General Manager  
40 Severance Circle  
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118  
216-291-5796  
[cainpark@clvhts.com](mailto:cainpark@clvhts.com)

### DAVID PARKER

The Bang Group Artistic Director  
131 Perry Street, # 1A  
New York, NY 10014  
212-243-4634  
[davidparker@thebanggroup.com](mailto:davidparker@thebanggroup.com)

### MICHAEL UTHOFF

Dance St. Louis Artistic & Executive Director  
3547 Olive Street  
St. Louis, MO 63103  
[MUthoff@dancestlouis.org](mailto:MUthoff@dancestlouis.org)



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[www.groundworksdance.org](http://www.groundworksdance.org)

# TOURING INFORMATION

## CURRENT TOURING PROGRAM

This touring program consists of three complete pieces, each around 25 minutes in length, and tours with 5 dancers. It offers a wide variety of styles and settings with a blend of familiar and new music. The full program lasts approximately 90 minutes with an intermission and a pause. Other program options are available from the complete repertory to complement the core touring program works listed below.

### “BRUBECK”

**BY DAVID SHIMOTAKAHARA (2012)**

Set to the music of American jazz icon Dave Brubeck, Shimotakahara’s “Brubeck” highlights several of the artist’s classic recordings which epitomize his career-long experimentation with unusual time signatures, and his brilliant partnership with saxophonist Paul Desmond. GroundWorks dancers are sent into wonderful motion and commotion around the infectious melodies and dynamic rhythms of one of jazz’s most enduring legends.

### “MY HUMMINGBIRD AT THE HIGH LINE”

**BY DOUG ELKINS (2012)**

This witty, classy and fresh new work by award winning choreographer and creator of “Fraulein Maria” is set to an eclectic mix of pop tunes from the Rat Pack and Frankie Valli to a Handel aria. It employs Elkins’ unique style mixing classical ballet, martial arts, and hip-hop moves giving the artists cheeky interactions to convey the joy and heartache of romantic relationships. Critics praise Elkins’ skillful craftsmanship, his humor and timing.

### “CODA”

**BY RONEN KORESH (2011)**

Commissioned in 2011, Koresh’s “CoDa” is set to haunting and exuberant music by French composer Rene Aubry and communicates a full range of life experiences with passion and humanity. Koresh has choreographed for dance companies throughout the U.S. as well as South Korea, Japan, Turkey and Israel, where he was born and raised. He formed the Koresh Dance Company, based in Philadelphia, PA, in 1991.

## FEES

Single performance: \$9,500 (includes transportation & lodging)  
Two performances: \$12,000 (includes transportation & lodging)  
Weekly Fee: \$15,000 (services included will be negotiated)

## BREAK OUT OF FEES FOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND WORKSHOPS

Workshop: \$ 350 - 400  
Master class: \$ 150 - 250  
Lecture/Demo: \$ 975 - 1,500  
Long-term Residencies: \$ 1,800 - 3,500  
(2 – 4 days, up to 4 Grade levels, K – 12)



GroundWorks travels with its lighting designer who serves as production technical director and stage manager.



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[www.groundworksdance.org](http://www.groundworksdance.org)



GROUNDWORKS DANCETHEATER

216-751-0088

13125 SHAKER SQUARE, SUITE 102

CLEVELAND, OHIO 44120

[WWW.GROUNDWORKSDANCE.ORG](http://WWW.GROUNDWORKSDANCE.ORG)



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