



MEET OUR ARTISTS

David Shimotakahara **Executive Artistic Director**

David Shimotakahara has been a 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 1983-1999. David also served as Rehearsal Assistant for the company from 1989-1999. From 1989-1997 he founded and was director of New Steps, an acclaimed dance project which offered a variety of programs that stimulated the creation and growth of new choreography in Northeast Ohio. David 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 in 1995, the Illinois Arts Council in 2001, and for the National Endowment for the Arts in 2001. David received 5 consecutive Individual Artist Fellowships for Choreography from the Ohio Arts Council from 1996 to 2004. In 1998 he received a McKnight Foundation Fellowship from the Minnesota Dance Alliance to create new work in the Minneapolis-St Paul communities. David was awarded the 2000 Cleveland Arts Prize for Dance. His work with GroundWorks DanceTheater was voted “One of 25” to Watch by *Dance Magazine*.

Gustavo Aguilar **Director of Music**

A percussionist, composer, and improviser, Gustavo Aguilar has been active in the creative music scene for almost a decade. His commitment to combining pre-composed (notated) and present-composed (improvised) musical elements has earned him the reputation as an “intuitive, methodical mystic.” Gustavo’s music has been called “beautiful, introspective and passionate” and “thought-provoking and thoroughly fresh.” A Brownsville, Texas native, he has appeared both as a solo performer and group collaborator in Australia, Austria, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, South Korea, Switzerland and Yugoslavia, as well as throughout the United States, performing improvisational compositions and works written exclusively for him. Gustavo has performed and/or recorded with such creative artists as John Bergamo, Anthony Braxton, Roy Campbell,

Nels Cline and many others. He has worked on the faculties of Del Mar College/Texas A&M Corpus Christi, Korea National University of the Arts and The University of Akron, and has given master classes at universities across the United States and abroad. Gustavo has served as GroundWorks' music director since its creation.

Amy Miller
Artistic Associate

Amy Miller has danced with GroundWorks since its inception in 1998. She received her training at The Dance Institute of The University of Akron and at the Joffrey Ballet School. Amy performed with the dance project New Steps from 1991-1997 and was a member of Ohio Ballet from 1991-2001, where she performed works by Paul Taylor, Jose Limon and Anthony Tudor, among others. In addition to her role in assisting with recreations of GroundWorks' repertory, she has represented the company through an ICARE funded educational partnership within the Cleveland Public Schools. Since relocating to New York City in 2011, Amy's solo work has been seen at Triskelion Arts, Spoke the Hub and at The Scandinavia House in collaboration with Oberlin College composer Peter Swendsen. Recent performing projects include Gibney Dance, David Parker and The Bang Group, Lynne Taylor-Corbett, Jill Sigman, Compagnie Julie Bour and Shandoah Goldman.

Felise Bagley
Dancer

A native New Yorker, Felise Bagley began as a Merit Scholarship recipient to The Alvin Ailey American Dance Center. As an Ailey student, she had the opportunity to perform with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre at New York's City Center. After dancing professionally with The Joyce Trisler Dance Company, Philadanco and Elisa Monte Dance Company, Felise became a scholarship recipient to The Joffrey Ballet School where she became a member of Joffrey II and a guest artist with The Joffrey Ballet of Chicago during their season of "The Joffrey Nutcracker" at The Kennedy Center. She then joined Ohio Ballet, under the direction of Heinz Poll, where she danced principal roles in Ruthanna Boris' "Cakewalk," Poll's "Shubert Waltzes," "Scenes from Childhood," "Planes and Configurations," "Duet," and the title role in Poll's only full-length story ballet, "Match Girl." Felise debuted with GroundWorks in 2001 in the ballet "Major to Minor."

Noelle Cotler
Dancer

Noelle Cotler began her dance training at her mother's studio, Images In Dance, in Batavia, NY at the age of 2. While attending high school she 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. Noelle then went on to receive her BFA in dance with honors in outstanding ballet performance at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA. In 2011 she travelled to Venice, Italy where she participated in Arsenale Della Danza, a professional program under the

direction of Ismael Ivo. Noelle 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 her first season with GroundWorks.

Damien Highfield

Dancer

Damien Highfield returned to Ohio from Atlanta Ballet. He began dancing at the age of 6 in his hometown of Columbus, where he trained at Balletmet for ten years, eventually becoming a member of Balletmet/Jazzmet. Damien then attended Butler University in Indianapolis. He has performed as a guest artist with Indianapolis Opera, Columbus Opera, Alexandra Ballet, Fort Wayne Ballet and the Academy of Ballet Arts. Damien has danced the title roles in "Hamlet," "Dracula," "The Nutcracker," "Sleeping Beauty," "Coppelia," "Cinderella" and the pas de deux in Alonzo King's "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."

Gary Lenington

Dancer

Gary Lenington is thankful to have had the privilege of training with Nan Klinger and the Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet. A former soloist with both Richmond Ballet and Ballet Florida, he 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. He has performed a wide range of classical and contemporary roles including Romeo from "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

Annika Sheaff earned a BFA from The Juilliard School where she received the Interarts Award for her community outreach work. Upon graduation, she 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 Annika toured America with Aszure Barton and Artists. She has taught Pilobolus workshops and master classes all over the world and 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. Annika joined GroundWorks in 2012 and she could not be more thrilled.