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Photos and interviews (English & Spanish) available upon request.

## **Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre to Receive \$10,000 Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts**

Chicago—Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre has been approved for a \$10,000 Grants for Arts Projects award to support its original piece SOUL REMEDY. Cerqua Rivera’s project is among 1,248 projects across America totaling \$28,840,000 that were selected to receive this first round of fiscal year 2022 funding in the Grants for Arts Projects category.

“The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to support arts projects like this one from Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre that help support the community’s creative economy,” said NEA Acting Chair Ann Eilers. “Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre in Chicago is among the arts organizations nationwide that are using the arts as a source of strength, a path to well-being, and providing access and opportunity for people to connect and find joy through the arts.”

“We are so grateful to the National Endowment for the Arts for recognizing our company and this piece,” says company Cofounder, Artistic Director & CEO, Wilfredo Rivera. “These past two years have been challenging but being quiet was not an option for us. As we forge into the unpredictable year ahead, we are proud to continue developing SOUL REMEDY with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts.”

Monique Haley, choreographer, is creating SOUL REMEDY with composer Pharez Whitted on the multicultural, multidisciplinary, multigenerational collective of artists at Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre. These two accomplished Black artists are leading exploration of the Aesthetic of the Cool, a culturally specific phenomenon rooted in the Black American experience that has shaped this country’s arts and culture and impacted the world. SOUL REMEDY will respect, reflect, and represent Black excellence as a central component of American culture.

This award comes on the heels of a remarkable 2021 season, which included

- **Black.Mixtape Award** by Golden Globe-winning actor, playwright, and activist Regina Taylor, in partnership with Southern Methodist University;
- Comparison to groundbreaker Twyla Tharp in the national publication **DANCE Magazine**;
- Named one of the Top 10 moments for Dance in 2021 by **Chicago Tribune**, and
- Named among Dance Top 5 of 2021 by **New City Stage**.

*For more information on other projects included in the Arts Endowment grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](https://arts.gov/news).*

## **Artist Biographies**

**Monique Haley** is an accomplished dancer, teacher and choreographer. She endured 9 memorable years with the River North Chicago Dance, as well as created and performed in theaters such as the Drury Lane Oakbrook, Paramount Aurora, and the Marriot Lincolnshire. Ms. Haley was the recipient the 3Arts award in 2012. Currently, she is Assistant Professor at Western Michigan University, teaching jazz dance curriculum and working with the musical theater students.

**Pharez Whitted's** performances include Presidential Inaugurations, The Arsenio Hall Show, Billboard Music Awards, Carnegie Hall, and major jazz festivals. He earned degrees at DePauw University (awarded an Alumni Citation 2018) and Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. He is Director of Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras Jazz Orchestra and Adjunct Professor at Northern Illinois University. He was nominated for Independent Jazz Artist of the Year in 2011 and named Chicagoan of the Year in Jazz in 2016.

**Wilfredo Rivera** is a Cofounder of Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre, Artistic Director & CEO since 2007. He is responsible for the evolution of CRDT's bold multi-cultural program and for establishing the company's authentic interdisciplinary trademark. He is a rare Latinx artist serving as full-time arts leader. Every season he carefully selects the leading collaborators and thematic concepts for Cerqua Rivera's season and curates the company's artistic process. He leads and manages all aspects of long-term planning and day-to-day administration of the 20+ year old company.

Decades as a working artist forged Wilfredo's belief that only a diverse group can create the artwork for which the company is known – eclectic, culturally rich, deeply moving, utterly relevant. In 2016, he launched his most ambitious artistic project to date, American Catracho. This 4-year exploration of immigration premiered in segments and debuted to critical acclaim in celebration of Cerqua Rivera's 20th Anniversary in 2019.

Wilfredo was born in Honduras, trained with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and was a founding member of River North Dance Chicago. He was honored with the 2009 Cliff Dwellers Arts Foundation Choreography Award, a 2001 After Dark Award and nominated for a 3Arts Award in 2016 & 2018. His concert work has been featured at the Auditorium Theatre, Chicago Jazz Festival, Hyde Park Jazz Festival, Harris Theater, Chicago Symphony Center with the Chicago Sinfonietta, Ruth Page Center for the Arts, DuSable Museum, Links Hall and Mayne Stage.

## **History and Administration**

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Catherine Painter - Managing Director - catherine@cerquarivera.org, 601-675-2738

Our mission: To use multiple artistic forms (primarily dance and music) and the combined talents of our diverse company to convey intense personal narratives. We are proudly and visibly multicultural, exploring the intersection of heritage, culture, and identity through high quality art. Our unique culture of collaboration and diversity fosters magnetic connections between artists and audiences.

Every year Cerqua Rivera develops new multi-disciplinary works which grow from in-depth research and strong personal narratives. Our season extends spring through fall and involves partner organizations across Chicago to engage a growing and diverse audience. We produce monthly Inside/Out events (interactive new

work previews and discussions) and a fall concert series where the year's new work is performed by our multitalented, multicultural Dance Ensemble and Jazz Band. We also perform in community and school settings. All told, Cerqua Rivera engages nearly 10,000 people in a normal year.

Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre is truly unique because it is the artistic vision of Latinx artist Wilfredo Rivera. Rivera is deeply committed to diversity and collaboration – thriving for two decades in an ecosystem that others find challenging to create. He recruits and fosters a diverse collective of artists every year. He draws out the best of his full company while maintaining the strong narrative focus of each project – be it the experience of immigrating from Central America to the USA or the legacy of African ancestors on a modern Black woman.

Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre can be found online at [www.cerquarivera.org](http://www.cerquarivera.org)  
on Facebook - Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre      on Instagram and Twitter @cerquarivera

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