NDEO 2023 National Award Recipients & Thom Cobb Scholarship

Virtual Awards Ceremony Program
September 13th, 2023

NDEO acknowledges the extraordinary individuals who have made vital contributions to the dance education field!

Lifetime Achievement - Mary Verdi-Fletcher & Clay Taliaferro
Lifetime Achievement (Posthumous) - H.T. Chen, Jennifer Muller, Myron Howard Nadel, Helene Scheff
Outstanding Dance Educator (PK-12 - Emerging) - Victoria Fraiser
Outstanding Dance Educator (PK-12 - Established) - Amanda Clark Tanruther & Leslie K. Williams
Outstanding Dance Education Researcher - Elizabeth McPherson & Karen Schupp
Outstanding Leadership (Higher Education) - Nadine George-Graves & C. Kemal Nance
Outstanding Leadership (Justice, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) - Crystal Davis & Collette Murray
Outstanding Leadership (PK-12) - Ann Biddle & Andrew Jannetti
Outstanding Leadership (Independent Sector) - Joan C. Brown, Jessie Levey, & Anabella Lenzu
Thom Cobb Memorial Scholarship - Eboni Jones

Order of Events:

Opening Remarks - NDEO President Yoav Kaddar

Lifetime Achievement - Mary Verdi-Fletcher presented by Dana Kuhn

Thom Cobb Scholarship Winner - Eboni Jones presented by Mary Harding

Outstanding Leadership (Higher Education) - Nadine George-Graves presented by Alesondra Christmas

Outstanding Dance Educator (PK-12 - Emerging) - Victoria Frasier presented by Yoav Kaddar

Lifetime Achievement Award Winner (Posthumous) - H.T. Chen presented by Dian Dong

Outstanding Leadership (JDEI) - Collette Murray presented by Yoav Kaddar

Outstanding Leadership (Independent Sector) - Anabella Lenzu presented by Yoav Kaddar
Lifetime Achievement Award Winner (Posthumous) - Jennifer Muller presented by Lana Heylock

Outstanding Leadership (JDEI) - Crystal Davis presented by Kelly Lester

Outstanding Dance Education Researcher - Karen Schupp presented by Yoav Kaddar

Outstanding Dance Educator (PK-12 - Established) - Amanda Clark Tanruther presented by Yoav Kaddar

Outstanding Leadership (PK-12) - Ann Biddle presented by Felice Santorelli

Outstanding Leadership (PK-12) - Andrew Jannetti presented by Lorna Sinclair

Lifetime Achievement Award Winner (Posthumous) - Myron Howard Nadel presented by Daniel Lewis

Outstanding Dance Educator (PK-12 - Established) - Leslie K. Williams presented Sandra Minton

Outstanding Leadership (Independent Sector) - Joan C. Brown presented by Sandra Minton

Outstanding Leadership (Higher Education) - C. Kemal Nance presented by Yoav Kaddar

Lifetime Achievement Award Winner (Posthumous) - Helene Scheff presented by Patricia Cohen, Marty Sprague, & Miriam Scheff

Outstanding Leadership (Independent Sector) - Jessie Levey presented by Yoav Kaddar

Outstanding Dance Education Researcher - Elizabeth McPherson presented by Yoav Kaddar

Lifetime Achievement Award Winner- Clay Taliaferro presented by Lisa Green-Cudek

Panel Discussion-Moderated by Yauri Dalencour

Closing Remarks

Special thanks to the 2023 Awards Committee: Yauri Dalencour, Director of Awards and Chair of Awards Committee; Committee members, Sherrie Barr, Paramita Bhattacharyya, Sade Edghill, Mary Fitzgerald, Kimberlee Gerstheimer, Eileen Hebron, Tamara Henry, Haley Jameson, Ji-Eun Lee, Amy Meehan, and Pascal Rekoert

(Please note: Committee members who are nominated for an award recuse themselves from the decision-making process for that particular award.)
**Lifetime Achievement (Living Artist/Educator)**

**Mary Verdi-Fletcher**, President/Founding Artistic Director of America’s first physically integrated dance company in America established in 1980. Mary has developed teacher certification programs along with her master teachers, Mark Tomasic, Catherine Meredith and Sara Lawrence-Sucato. As America’s first professional wheelchair dancer, Mary has been a pioneering force in developing techniques for fully inclusive classes and performance opportunities. A champion for full and equal rights, her dream is to see all dance departments in universities and colleges offer equitable classes to dancers with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers and to be able to obtain the same degrees in dance as their non-disabled peers. For 42 years, Mary and her Company, Dancing Wheels has toured the globe reaching over 3 million people through performances, master classes, workshops and lecture/performances. With more than 100 works in their repertory, Dancing Wheels has had the honor of working with such great choreographers as Donald McKayle, Donald Byrd and Dianne McIntyre to name a few. For more information on Mary and the Company and School go to [www.dancingwheels.org](http://www.dancingwheels.org).

**Thom Cobb Memorial Scholarship**

Eboni Jones is an accomplished dancer, choreographer, and educator who has been honing her craft for over 25 years. As a graduate of The Ohio State University (Columbus, OH) with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Dance Performance, Eboni uses dance as a vehicle for social change, community engagement, and an expression of identity. Eboni is currently the Dance Educator at Mount Vernon High School and the Director of the Liturgical Dance Ministry at Alfred Street Baptist Church both located in Alexandria, VA. In the Summer, Eboni lends her voice to the Dance Arts Summer Curriculum Development team for Fairfax County Public Schools to develop resources to support teaching and learning in dance across the county. She also has the pleasure of working with McNeil Creative Enterprises as the Project Coordinator and with Local Motion Project as the Assistant Director where she utilizes her arts administration skills to support the enhancement of the arts.

**Outstanding Leadership in Higher Education**

**Nadine George-Graves** is the Naomi Willie Pollard Professor at Northwestern University where she chairs the Performance Studies Department and has a joint appointment in the Theatre Department. She is an artist and scholar whose work is situated at the intersections of African American studies, critical gender studies, performance studies, theatre history, and dance history. She serves as Executive Co-editor of Dance Research Journal and is a past-president of the Congress on Research in Dance (CORD). She is the author of The Royalty of Negro Vaudeville: The Whitman Sisters and the Negotiation of Race, Gender, and Class in African American Theater, 1900-1940 and Urban Bush Women: Twenty Years of Dance Theater, Community Engagement and Working it Out as well as numerous articles on African American performance. She is the editor of The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Theater and the DRJ special topics issue Arms Akimbo: Black Women Choreographic Social Change.
Outstanding Dance Educator (PK-12 Emerging)

Victoria Danica Frasier. My name is Victoria. Mostly everyone calls me Vickie. I have always had a love for dance. I shared my passion for dance with all my students in whatever grade I taught whether it’s through creative movement or teaching academic subjects through dance, dance will always be apart of my classroom. My love for teaching dance prompted me to go back to NYU and study dance education. I started off in the professions track but decided to switch to the African Diaspora track being that was the area of dance that I loved. In my last semester at at NYU I wrote a curriculum based on implementing creative movement through dances of the African diaspora in the early childhood classroom. I graduated from NYU summer of 2022 with a masters in dance education via dances of the African Diaspora track. This past school year I implemented my curriculum into my 3k classroom. Each month my students learned a dance from one of the countries in the Diaspora. They also performed at the Bronx District Arts Festival. At the end of the school year I was offered a position to teach dance to the 3k/PK students and I gladly accepted.

Lifetime Achievement (Posthumous)

Born in Shanghai, China and raised in Taiwan, Hsueh-Tung (H.T.) Chen trained in traditional dance and Chinese Opera Movement at the University of Chinese Culture in Taiwan (BFA). In 1972, H.T. came to New York to study modern dance; studying at the Graham School, the Ailey School, the Juilliard School (Diploma, ‘76), and received his master’s in Dance Education (‘78) from NYU. H.T. Chen was distinguished for having created a body of work addressing Chinese-American history through oral histories and site visits to Chinese enclaves nationwide. He believed that “good art has social value”. H.T. and his wife, Dian Dong (Juilliard BFA ’75), founded Chen Dance Center in the heart of Chinatown, NY comprised of resident company H.T. Chen & Dancers, The School and Theater which served both the local families as well as the dance community through performances, artist residencies and classes. The company toured throughout the US, as well as Asia and Europe. H.T. served on panels for NYSCA, NYC DCLA, NEA, Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation. He also served on the boards of: Dance USA, Dance Theater Workshop, Pan Asian Repertory Theatre. H.T. Chen was recipient of the NYS Governor’s Arts Award, the NYC Mayor’s Award, honored by the Organization of Chinese Americans, the Chinatown Planning Council and the CUNY Chinese Alumni Association. His company was supported by the Ford Foundation, the Doris Duke Foundation, Wallace Foundation, and other supporters. H.T. was deeply influenced by the work at LaMaMa Experimental Theater where he was a performer and choreographer, by Anna Sokolow whom he and Dian both worked for, and by the stories of the Chinese diaspora. His signature works on Chinese American labor and immigration included the building of the Transcontinental Railroad, Angel Island Immigration Station, the 1870 shoe factory strike in Western Massachusetts, Chinatown sewing factories, and Chinese who settled in the southern states. H.T. Chen is survived by his wife Dian Dong, and dancing daughters Yeeli and Evelyn Chen. An avid gardener, his two pine trees at ConfuciusPark spurred the planting of 120 cherry blossom trees and flowering plants in Chinatown, NY.
Outstanding Leadership Justice, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Collette Murray is a dance scholar in arts education, community arts engagement and Afro diasporic dance vernacular. Collette centralizes dance education in teaching, mentorship, and advocacy of the Canadian African diasporic dance sector. Her multi-award recognitions are for advancing the importance of cultural arts and anti-racism work in dance in Ontario and for significant contributions to collaboratively work with culturally diverse communities and creating access to arts and culture in Toronto. With a background in West African, Caribbean folk, and stilt-walking/dance, Murray pursues a Ph.D. in Dance Studies at York University on the pedagogical training of Afro diasporic dance educators. Murray holds a master’s in education, an Honours BA in Race, Ethnicity and Indigeneity from York University, and a Sociology BA from the University of Toronto. Miss Coco Murray is her mobile dance education business, and she is artistic director of Coco Collective, an intergenerational team offering culturally responsive dance programs and cultural arts education of African and Caribbean practices to schools, organizations, and communities. Murray leads as Board Chair of Dance Umbrella of Ontario, a National Council member of the Canadian Dance Assembly, and the Board of Directors for Arts Etobicoke to bring an equity and decolonizing lens for change.

Outstanding Leadership in the Independent Sector

Originally from Argentina, Anabella Lenzu is a dancer, choreographer, scholar & educator with over 30 years of experience working in Argentina, Chile, Italy, and the USA. Lenzu directs her own company, Anabella Lenzu/DanceDrama, which since 2006 has presented 400 performances, created 15 choreographic works and performed at 100 venues, presenting thought provoking and historically conscious dance-theater in NYC. As a choreographer, she has been commissioned all over the world for opera, TV programs, theatre productions, and by many dance companies. She has produced and directed several award-winning short dance films and screened her work in over 200 festivals both nationally and internationally. Lenzu founded her own dance school L’Atelier Centro Creativo de Danza in 1994 in Argentina, and as an educator for more than 30 years, she has been teaching in more than 50 institutions, including universities, professional dance studios, companies, festivals, and symposiums in the USA, Canada, Ireland, Egypt, Australia, Panamá, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, London, and Italy. Lenzu has written for various dance and arts magazines and published her first book in 2013, entitled Unveiling Motion and Emotion. The book contains writings in Spanish and English on the importance of dance, community, choreography, and dance pedagogy.
**Lifetime Achievement (Posthumous)**

**Jennifer Muller** was a major presence in the dance world for over 50 years. She is known for her visionary approach in dance/theater, multi-disciplinary productions incorporating spoken word, live and commissioned music, art-inspired stage decor, and innovative production elements. Muller created over 125 pieces including seven full evening productions. A writer and dramaturge as well as choreographer, she is recognized as a seminal influence on dance/theater, collaborating with significant artists such as Keith Haring, Yoko Ono, David van Tiegham, Keith Jarrett, Burt Alcantara, Marty Beller, and Jeff Croiter. Under the designation Stageworks, she designed costumes, lights, and décor. The Muller company gained international recognition for its dynamic, theatrical productions, distinctive movement style and technical virtuosity. The company toured worldwide to 39 countries on 4 continents, 30 states, and 27 NYC seasons from 1974-2021. Muller created and re-staged pieces for 26 international repertory companies, including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ohio Ballet (USA); Tanz-Forum (Germany), Ballet du Nord and Lyon Opera Ballet (France), Aterballetto (Italy), Bat Dor (Israel); Ballet Jazz de Montreal (Canada), Ballet Contemporaneo (Argentina), Nederlands Dans Theater, NDT3, and Introdans (Netherlands) amongst others. Muller's influence extended to theater and opera productions at Public Theater, 2nd Stage Theater, NY Stage & Film, Juilliard Opera Center, and NYC Opera. She also choreographed the spectacular, multidisciplinary musical Spiral in China and directed Peter Maxwell Davies' Le Jongleur. Muller’s prolific contributions have led to honors: A Founding Member of World Art Council, Fortaleza’s 2010 Trophy of Cultural Responsibility, Joyce Theater’s 25@25 Initiative, American Masterpieces: Artistic Genius Grant and publication, Transformation & Continuance: Jennifer Muller and the Reshaping of American Modern Dance. Based on early exposure to Eastern Philosophy, she developed a personalized methodology, the Muller Polarity Technique, chosen by Tanzplan Berlin as one of seven contemporary dance techniques for its groundbreaking publication/DVD Tanztechnik 2010. An internationally renowned teacher and mentor, Muller originated the Creative Mind Workshops to foster innovative thinking, and conducted workshops in creativity, collaboration, and choreography worldwide. Dance was Muller's lifelong passion and artistic voice. During her illustrious career, she inspired generations through her dynamic stage presence, directorship, and visionary choreography.

**Outstanding Leadership in Justice, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion**

**Crystal U. Davis** is a dancer, educator, movement analyst, and critical race theorist with twenty years of experience teaching dance and supervising dance educators in P-12 education. Her work has been published in the Journal of Dance Education, in the Palgrave Handbook of Race and the Arts in Education, and in her book, Dance and Belonging: Implicit Bias and Inclusion in Dance Education. She obtained her B.A. in Comparative Religion from Emory University, M.F.A in Dance from Texas Woman’s University, M.A. in Performance Studies from New York University, and C.L.M.A. from Integrated Movement Studies. Her professional experience spans working as an aesthetic education teaching artist at the Lincoln Center Institute to consulting state departments of education and dance organizations about bias in their evaluative rubrics. Ms. Davis’ dance performances include East Indian dance forms, West African dance forms, and her own postmodern choreography that examines the incongruities between what we say we believe and what we do. She is an Associate Professor of Dance Performance and Scholarship at the University of Maryland, College Park where
she teaches anti-racist pedagogy for dance and theater courses, modern technique, somatics, and movement analysis.

**Outstanding Dance Education Researcher**

Karen Schupp, MFA, is a Professor of Dance at Arizona State University. Her research commitments include dance competition culture, postsecondary dance curriculum and pedagogy, and equity and ethics across dance education. Her books include Studying Dance; Dance Education and Responsible Citizenship; Futures of Performance; Ethical Dilemmas in Dance Education (co-edited with Doug Risner), which received the Susan W. Stinson Book Award and NDEO’s Ruth Lovell Murray Book Award in 2021; and Dancing Across the Lifespan (co-edited with Pam Musil and Doug Risner), which received the Susan W. Stinson Book Award in 2022. Professor Schupp is the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Dance Education. Her scholarly work has been published in numerous journals and anthologies, and her choreography has been featured across the US and internationally. At ASU, Professor Schupp is the Associate Director for Curriculum and Instruction in the School of Music, Dance and Theatre. Her accomplishments have been recognized by her alma mater, SUNY at Buffalo; the Arizona Commission on the Arts; the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts; and the Los Angeles Dance Resource Center (Horton Awards). Professor Schupp’s forthcoming projects include the book Stories We Dance/Stories We Tell, co-edited with Sherrie Barr.

**Outstanding Dance Educator (PK-12 Established)**

Amanda Clark earned her MFA in Contemporary Dance in 2015 from Case Western Reserve University with the Henry Kurth Award, the Grace Petot Award for Research Excellence, and a Pancoast Fellowship for her research in The Netherlands. Her BFA was earned in 2008 at Kent State University with the award of Outstanding Educational Leadership, with avid work through the NDEO, co-founding the student affiliate KSU-DEO. Clark was the NDEO Student Representative to the Board 2006-2008. As an independent artist, she has performed throughout the US and internationally; and has been performing with MorrisonDance since 2014. In Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Clark is the Director of Dance at Cleveland School of the Arts. She developed dance programming in multiple urban districts and wrote curriculum for two new programs spanning K-12 and developed a new curriculum for CSA which is now home to a NHSDA chapter. In CMSD she has served on building leadership teams and worked on the core team for the district’s Arts Education Committee. She has served on the Ohio Department of Education’s Standards Revision team in 2019 and 2022 and is a Resident Educator mentor in her district as well as a cooperating teacher for rising dance educators.
Ann Biddle  M.A., Dance Ed, Columbia University, B.A., English, Kenyon College and Fulbright Scholar. Ms. Biddle has been a dance educator, arts administrator, teacher trainer, curriculum writer, and dancer/choreographer. She was the Founding Faculty of the Dance Education Laboratory (DEL) and is the Director of the DEL Institute and Director of DEL at Jacob’s Pillow. Ms. Biddle has trained thousands of dance educators and worked with many dance companies including Flamenco Vivo, Limón Dance Company, Ballet Hispanico, UBW, HT Chen, Jonah Bokaer, and Dorrance Dance. Her curricula include New York Export: Opus Jazz, Jerome Robbins: The Essence of Cool, Dance Making & Langston Hughes, The Essence of Pearl Primus, Into Sunlight – A Teacher’s Guide, Re-imagining D-Man in the Waters, and the DEL Facilitators Manual. Ms. Biddle was an advisor to the NYC Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance and was a NYCDOE facilitator since 2005. She is the Director of the DEL PVPA dance mentorship program featured in the recent documentary, PS Dance! The Next Generation (2022). She currently is a dance lecturer at UMASS/Amherst and enrolled in the Ed.D program in Dance Education at TC, Columbia University. Ms. Biddle’s research focuses on transformative adult learning and leadership.

Andrew Jannetti, MA is based in NYC and has a distinguished career as a choreographer, dancer, educator, fitness instructor, and producer. He has presented choreography at DTW, St. Marks’s Danspace, Gibney Arts, 92nd Street Y, Alvin Ailey Center, The Duke, DIA, Brooklyn Arts Exchange (BAX), Cunningham, DUMBO Dance Festival, CoolNY Festival, ADG Festival, NY International Dance Festival, and the Edinburgh Festival. He works full time as a Pre-K thru Grade 5 Dance Educator for the NYC Department of Education and also at BAX for over 30 years in many roles from Teaching Artist to Education Director and Director of their School Breaks program. He is an Adjunct Professor at Rutgers, New Brunswick and at St. Francis College in Brooklyn. He’s received grants from NYSCA, NJSCA, MCAF, Meet The Composers, the Field, and the Harkness Center. He was awarded a BAXten award, a PASEtter award, the Dani Nikas Excellence in Teaching Award, a Lifetime Achievement Award from NYSDEA, and is one of the first DEL Lab School recipients. He is a Past-President of the New York State Dance Education Association, an Integral part of Men in Dance and served on the Advisory Board of NDEO. He believes that dance is transformative.
Lifetime Achievement (Posthumous)

Myron Howard Nadel

Myron Howard Nadel held a Bachelor of Science degree from the Juilliard School, where he studied with Martha Graham, Martha Hill, Louis Horst, José Limón, and Antony Tudor. He then received a Master of Arts from Columbia University Teachers College. Performing professionally from an early age, Myron was a member of Actors Equity Association and the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers. His choreographed works have been presented by the Milwaukee and Maryland Ballets, CBS Repertoire Workshop, and The Dance Company of Sydney, as well as other companies in Australia and Norway. As the founding Chair of the Dance Department at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Myron was also the first resident choreographer of the Milwaukee Ballet Company. He was then Coordinator for Music Theatre at Carnegie Mellon University, followed by his tenure as Chair of Performing Arts at Buffalo State College. At the University of Texas at El Paso, he was Associate Dean of Liberal Arts, and until his recent retirement, he was the Head of Dance. Myron’s scholarship and his textbooks have investigated the needs of college students approaching the study of dance. He co-authored three versions of The Dance Experience, winning Critics’ Choice Award as best academic title for The Dance Experience: Insights into History, Culture, and Creativity. Myron also co-authored Looking at Contemporary Dance: A Guide for the Internet Age, an innovative book addressing dance as a complex, global, and transnational practice in the digital realm that has been widely adopted across campuses in the United States. His articles have appeared in Dance Magazine, Dance Teacher Magazine, Australian Dance Magazine, The Encyclopedia of Human Sexuality, and the Contemporary Education Journal. Myron has established The Myron Howard Nadel Scholarship in Dance to help talented dance students at The Juilliard School who might otherwise be unable to attend. It was his fondest hope that this scholarship would help Juilliard students achieve their dreams. Myron Howard Nadel was an exemplary dance educator, scholar, ardent believer in the National Dance Educators Organization and its goals, and a friend to the world of dance education.

Outstanding Dance Educator (PK-12 Established)

Leslie K. Williams

Leslie K. Williams is the Director of Dance at Liberty High School in Colorado Springs and has proudly been a Liberty Lancer since 2008. Leslie's involvement in performing arts education includes public school instructor; private studio teacher; musical theater, show choir and color guard choreographer; stage manager and technical director. In 2010 she was awarded the Distinguished Service within the Profession award from the Alliance for Colorado Theatre for her work in public education musical theatre; in 2017 she was part of the Thomas S. Crawford Team of the Year for Academy District 20. Leslie has presented at the NDEO National Conference and has twice been a member of the Standards Review Committee for Dance in Colorado. She has a BA in Theater and Dance Performance from Lindenwood University and an MA in Dance Education from the University of Northern Colorado.
Outstanding Leadership in the Independent Sector


Outstanding Leadership in Higher Education

C. Kemal Nance, PhD, a native of Chester, Pennsylvania is a performer, choreographer, and scholar of African Diasporic Dance. He is an Associate Professor in the Departments of Dance and African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where he is a newly appointed Dean’s Fellow for the College of Fine and Applied Arts. As the senior master teacher of the Umfundalai technique of contemporary African dance, his consultant work with the National Association of American African Dance Teachers has unearthed certification programs in recreational and professional Umfundalai teaching. Nance directs the Nance Dance Collective (www.blackmendance.com), an all-male dance initiative that produces dance works about Black manhood. His choreographies have appeared on national and international stages and film festivals and his scholarly research appears in several anthologies including Dance and the Quality of Life, Hot Feet and Social Change African Dance in Diasporic Communities, and Masculinity, Intersectionality and Identity: Why Boys (Don’t) Dance. He is the 2023 recipient of the Artist Fellowship from the Illinois Arts Council Agency. Nance holds a BA in Sociology/Anthropology with the concentration in Black Studies from Swarthmore College (Swarthmore, Pennsylvania) and M. Ed and PhD degrees in Dance from Temple University (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania).
Lifetime Achievement (Posthumous)

Helene Scheff was a vibrant creative thinker and problem solver who devoted her life to dance and her family. A founding member of NDEO, she served as conference planner from 2005-2015, mentoring many of us as dancers, educators, writers, and administrators. Born in Brooklyn, NY, Helene taught dance in the private and public sectors for over 60 years. She co-authored five books (with NDEO Executive Director Susan McGreevy-Nichols and Marty Sprague), including Experiencing Dance: From Student to Dance Artist, a widely-adopted high school textbook that helps educators incorporate dance into their classes. In 1986 she began Chance to Dance, an in-school dance program in Rhode Island for children in grades 3 - 6, founded on her belief that every child should have a chance to dance. Helene received the NDEO Outstanding Dance Educator award in 2008 and the NDEO President’s Award in 2016 as well as several Rhode Island awards. She was a founding member, the heartbeat and former president of NDEO state affiliate, Dance Alliance of RI. Helene kept dancing throughout her life. Most recently, she taught a chair dance class to fellow residents at the assisted living facility where her husband Ed still resides. At the time of her passing, Helene was working on a guest post for NDEO’s Behind the Curtain blog that outlined her teaching methods for these classes and the impact they had on the community. Ed is also part of the NDEO story, as he edited and produced our conference books for so many years. Helene had a delightful story for every occasion. She may be best understood through this excerpted quote from her granddaughter, Miriam, who is now an educator in RI: “Her legacy as a dancer, choreographer, educator, administrator and fierce advocate for the arts will be honored and cherished. Finding sneakers for students at school who had none, stepping in as “mom” for those that needed an extra hug, advocating for those who could not advocate for themselves. She taught us the importance of creativity, always working on a project and always, always dancing.”

Outstanding Leadership in the Independent Sector

Jessie Levey is the founder and director of Barefoot Dance Center in New York’s Hudson Valley where she teaches babies to adults and directs a teen dance company. She creates curriculums to educate the whole person through somatics, creativity, and identity. Jessie also works with schools and senior centers as an artist-in-residence and leads workshops for classroom and dance educators. Originally a contemporary post-modern dancer and choreographer from NYC, Jessie taught in the city’s public and independent schools and community organizations. Jessie is an active member of NDEO’s Dance 2050 Think Tank where she works with other educators to envision a dance education continuum from early childhood through higher education programs. You may find two published articles written by Jessie in DEiP and hear her discuss the importance of empowering girls through dance education on NPR’s 51%. In 2021, Jessie was honored to receive the Outstanding Dance Educator Award from New York State Dance Education Association. She was also the recipient of the 2015-17 Jubilation Foundation Fellowship for excellence in teaching. She is a Registered Somatic Dance Educator, Certified Yoga Teacher, and holds an MFA in Dance from The Peck School of the Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
Outstanding Dance Education Researcher

Elizabeth McPherson is a Professor, Dance Division Director, and MFA Dance coordinator at Montclair State University. She is the author of "The Contributions of Martha Hill to American Dance and Dance Education, 1900-1995," co-author of "Broadway, Balanchine and Beyond: A Memoir," and editor/compiler of "The Bennington School of the Dance: A History in Writings and Interviews." Her newest book "Milestones in Dance in the USA," an edited collection designed for dance history courses, was published by Routledge in September 2022 and is a 2023 recipient of NDEO’s Ruth Lovell Murray book award. Executive Editor of the journal "Dance Education in Practice," she has also written numerous articles and reviews for a variety of publications. She has worked as an educational consultant for NDEO, the NYC Department of Education, and the New Jersey Department of Education, and she is a board member of the Martha Hill Dance Fund as well as on the Advisory Council for NDEO. Elizabeth has staged numerous works from Labanotation and other sources such as Antony Tudor’s "Continuo" and Donald McKayle’s "Games." She received her BFA from Juilliard, an MA from The City College of New York, and a PhD from NYU.

Lifetime Achievement (Living Artist/Educator)

Clay Taliaferro has an international reputation as an award-winning performer, teacher, and choreographer. Invited by José Limón to join his company, and subsequently performing his roles in twentieth century masterworks of choreography, the Duke University emeritus professor Taliaferro, and former Acting Artistic Director for the Donald McKayle Dance Co. also served the Limón Company as assistant artistic director to Ruth Currier. As a servant of the great minds who created great dances whose names are redolent of history and tradition, Clay, with relish, celebrates the great continuum of his dance legacy in all his endeavors. He is a recipient of numerous awards including choreography grants from the NEA; distinguished teaching awards from Duke University, The NC School of the Arts; NC Dance Alliance Annual Award; The Boston Conservatory 2009 Distinguished Alumni Award; and in 1985, an honorary doctorate from Rhode Island College. In his six-plus decades of having the “good luck and privilege” of living his art, Clay Taliaferro, a student of the world, enjoys the work he currently is doing with people from all walks of life, using dance as a catalyst for rediscovering spirit and empowering a sense of personal essence and wellness.