

# VELOCITY

## VELOCITY DANCE CENTER

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For Immediate Release

### Media Contacts

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Velocity Dance Center announces the development of:

## **MOUTHWATER FESTIVAL: A NEW DISABLED ARTS FESTIVAL SET TO LAUNCH IN 2024**

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**Seattle, WA - Black disabled local artist has been awarded a multi-year Mellon Foundation grant, which will be used to develop and launch Mouthwater Festival, a new disabled arts fringe festival coming to Seattle in fall 2024.**

Co-founded by Saira Barbaric, NEVE and Vanessa Hernández Cruz, Mouthwater Festival will span Seattle showcasing performance art, theater, dance, and music by disabled creatives. Disabled artists from all over the country will gather in town to share their work, develop their practice, and foster cross-disability solidarity and creativity.

Barbaric was the initial grant recipient, which was intended to support the research,

investigation, and design of an accessible artistic structure. They have been a part of Seattle's arts scene since 2016, known for producing events, performing burlesque and showing visual art with a variety of queer and erotic art collectives. Barbaric's work spans mediums considered both high and low art and builds nuanced representations of trans people, disabled people, and Black people, which are some of the intersections that Barbaric inhabits.

"I am thrilled to receive support from the Mellon Foundation to create, research, tour and build this festival. I believe that the Mouthwater Festival has the potential to be a transformative force in our city. By creating a platform for disabled artists, we can address some systemic barriers and set standards for a more vibrant and understanding norm within the arts community. I am honored to be in process with my collaborators, disability justice leaders and the Seattle arts community," said Barbaric. To support this group founding, Barbaric has reached out to NEVE, a mixed-Black Seattle local who's an internationally recognized dancer, and Vanessa Hernández Cruz, a Chicana Los Angeles based Disabled dance artist and experienced creative.

From Vanessa: "This is going to be an incredibly beautiful & radical festival! I am deeply overjoyed to be a part of this journey to bring this into fruition. What I am most excited about, is the convening of all the amazing talented Disabled artists & being able to uplift, share, & celebrate our work. Experiencing Crip Joy together!"

"What is so exciting to me about the Mouthwater Festival is that it will introduce so many Disabled artists to one another's work, further strengthening our Disabled arts community, it will familiarize more people in Seattle with both the national and local, vibrant Disabled arts scene, and it will put Seattle on the map as a Disabled dance and arts hub. I'm happily bracing for the creative explosion," shared NEVE

Mouthwater Festival will create an arts hub by and for Black, Brown, and Indigenous disabled artists to present, collaborate, and get paid. The performances will happen all over town giving Seattleites the chance to catch a cabaret, a waterfront showing or a night of theater. The festival's values are anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, pro-black, disability justice-informed, afrofuturist, sex educated, and practical. NEVE and Saira Barbaric dream of making Seattle a regular stomping ground for disabled artists to thrive and grow.

Erin Johnson, Executive Director of Velocity, is excited to see a national funder investing in a Seattle-based artist and hopes that Seattle funders, audiences, and advocates will match this national interest. "As we build a community of support around the first iteration of the Mouthwater Festival, it is crucial that we consider not just this first year, but how we invest long-term in artists and projects like this festival. These are the projects and people that will shape the Seattle arts and culture landscape for the next 20

years and bring us closer to our vision of a vibrant and inclusive community. This is the time to invest.”

The Mouthwater Festival will take place in Seattle with an artist incubator in late September 2024 and free or ticketed events from October 1-13, 2024. The festival is in the early stages of identifying venues, partners, and supporters. Mouthwater Festival is being produced through Velocity Dance Center’s Made in Seattle new dance development program, and will be anchored at 12th Avenue Arts on Capitol Hill.

For more information on the Mouthwater Festival, visit the festival landing page at [velocitydancecenter.org/mouthwater](http://velocitydancecenter.org/mouthwater), reach out via email or follow us on social media.

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**DATES:** Artist Residency + Exchange, SEP 23-29, 2024  
Public Events + Performances, OCT 1-13, 2024  
**LOCATION:** 12th Ave Arts | 1620 12th Ave (+ more)  
**SOCIAL MEDIA:** @velocity\_seattle  
**EMAIL:** [mouthwaterdance@gmail.com](mailto:mouthwaterdance@gmail.com)

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**SAIRA BARBARIC** (he/they/she/ze) is a Black disabled nonbinary multidisciplinary artist. Based in Seattle in 2016, Saira creates collages, events, performance art and short films. Their work has shown in movie theaters, nightclubs, performance spaces and public parks around Seattle, across the U.S. and in European cities like Rome and Berlin. Saira co-founded the queer porn crew, Scumtrust Productions and the burgeoning dance-media project, Mouthwater. Check out [Barbaric-art.com](http://Barbaric-art.com) for more about Saira’s projects and practice.

**NEVE** [they/he/she] NEVE is a Disabled, multiracial, multidimensional dramatic terpsichorean multigender femme artist. They are a mixed Sudanese Nubian living in Duwamish country and traveling wherever they have access/an invitation. He is a 2020 Pina Bausch Fellow, a 2022 Arc Artist Fellow and a Disability Ford Futures Fellow! She is a contributing arts writer at the South Seattle Emerald, and an organizer with Creating New Futures. They collaborate with friend and fellow Seattle multidisciplinary artist Saira Barbaric as Mouthwater.

NEVE loves life, the delights and pains of love, the higher power inside us, the earth's lullabies and war cries, drinking color, and dreaming with their queer family (especially their cat child Caravaggio). Visit him online at [nevebebad.com](http://nevebebad.com), and on social medias at @nevethoh.

**VANESSA HERNÁNDEZ CRUZ** (she, her, ella) is an interdependent Chicana Disabled dance artist, filmmaker, visual artist, poet & a Disability Justice activist. She obtained her BA in Dance Science from California State University Long Beach.

Over the past few years, Vanessa's work has been shown nationally & internationally. So far this year, she was commissioned by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs to create & perform a new work titled: "La Lucha Sigue/The Fight Continues" to celebrate & honor Corita Kent & Dolores Huerta. She was a guest speaker at Chapman University where spoke about Disability dance & workshopped her contemporary ballet repertoire *Nycto-Eternity*.

At the moment, she is getting ready to premiere a new evening length contemporary solo titled: "Metal, Plastic, Skin" in mid-July in Los Angeles. This work explores vulnerability fatigue and how medical equipment is a form of assimilation, survival, & freedom.

To learn more visit: <https://www.galaxiesdance.info>

Follow IG: @GalaxiesDance

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## **ABOUT THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION**

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the nation's largest supporter of the arts and humanities. Since 1969, the Foundation has been guided by its core belief that the humanities and arts are essential to human understanding. The Foundation believes that the arts and humanities are where we express our complex humanity, and that everyone deserves the beauty, transcendence, and freedom that can be found there. Through our grants, we seek to build just communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive. Learn more at [mellon.org](http://mellon.org).

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## **ABOUT VELOCITY**

Velocity is Seattle's center dedicated to contemporary dance, and an essential incubator for new dance in our region. With artist-driven, community-responsive programming, Velocity provides vital resources and advocacy for one of the most active dance communities in the nation. Velocity's programming includes classes, workshops, residencies, performances, discussions, and the Seattle Festival of Dance + Improvisation.

Velocity advances contemporary dance and movement-based art by fostering the creative explorations of artists and audiences through an invested commitment to education, creation, performance, inquiry, community participation, and inter/national exchange.

Facebook: @VelocityDanceCenter

Instagram: @velocity\_seattle

Website: [velocitydancecenter.org](http://velocitydancecenter.org)

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