The Dancing Wheels Company & School Presents



January 17, 2021
2:00 p.m. EST
Live and Live-Streamed from the
Breen Center for the Arts
Cleveland, Ohio



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Mary Verdi-Fletcher, President/Founding Artistic Director

Sara Lawrence-Sucato, Rehearsal Director and
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Marissa Thomas, Tour Manager
Matthew Bowman, Director of the School of Dancing Wheels,
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Matthew Bowman, Tanya Ewell, Jared Harden, Molly Haslag, Bryant Henderson*, Cody Krause, Raul Panzar, Sara Lawrence-Sucato, Craig Sams III*, Celina Speck, Marissa Thomas, Mary Verdi-Fletcher, Morgan Walker

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+ indicates staff

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Dancing Wheels Company & School, I welcome you to our 40th Anniversary season and this year's production of *The Snowman*!

Whether you are joining us virtually through our first-ever live streaming efforts or have the opportunity to see the production in the safety and comfort of the theater, we are extremely excited to bring this family favorite to you and your loved ones!

The story of *The Snowman* is of particular significance now more than ever, as it conveys how a child who is isolated and lonely uses his imagination to go on a fantastical journey with his newfound friend, the Snowman. During their amazing journey, they discover new places and adventures never experienced before. Whether it is a dream or his remarkable imagination, the boy transports himself and all who go along the journey with him to a place of joy, heartwarming moments and, of course, laugh-out-loud antics!

It is our hope that your experience with this *The Snowman* production will bring you some relief and delight during this unprecedented time of uncertainly and concern. We at the Dancing Wheels Company & School believe whole heartedly in the importance of our artistry and our duty to use our art to bring us together and provide solace and hope to you, our faithful patrons.

With Gratitude and Love,

Mary Verdi-Fletcher

President/Founding Artistic Director

Mary Verdi-Fletcher

History and Mission of the Company:

Mary Verdi-Fletcher, America's first professional wheelchair dancer, founded The Dancing Wheels Company in 1980 in Cleveland, Ohio. Having been born with spina bifida, Mary wanted to open the doors of opportunity for people with disabilities who wanted to pursue their goals on an equal ground with their non-disabled peers. Mary always wanted to be a professional dancer, and was not going to let her disability stand in her way. The Dancing Wheels Company was formed to employ professionally-trained dancers, with and without disabilities. Forty years ago this concept was uncharted territory in the world of dance, but Mary's passion and perseverance has revolutionized the idea of dance and the notion of who should or could participate.

Now in its 40th season, The Dancing Wheels Company is America's first and foremost physically integrated company, with a composition of professional stand-up and sit-down dancers, and branded as the World Center for Integrated Dance & Arts Access. Prior to COVID-19, the company toured globally, presenting innovative works from nationally acclaimed choreographers. The Company plans to present its diverse programs both virtually and in person and to continue touring post-COVID thereby giving audiences worldwide the opportunity to see and participate in the Company's unique offerings. The company typically presents in more than 50 cities to audiences of 50,000 or more. The School of Dancing Wheels, established in 1990, is the only multi-arts school in Ohio focused on inclusive classes. The School offers dance, movement, and theater classes for children and adults with and without disabilities in the greater Cleveland community and throughout America. The School of Dancing Wheels' inclusive arts programming typically reaches over 7,000 children and adults with and without disabilities and economic challenges each year.

About the Production:

This whimsical winter story ballet follows a young boy, James, on an incredible adventure with his new friend, the Snowman. James and the Snowman encounter fantastical woodland creatures, dancing penguins, and friendly snow people throughout their magical journey together.

Based on the book by Raymond Briggs and with music by Howard Blake, The Snowman has become a Dancing Wheels staple production and has uplifted the spirits of the young—and the young at heart—for two decades. Thank you for joining The Dancing Wheels Company & School as we present our beloved holiday classic.

This production of *The Snowman* is dedicated in loving memory of Maria Kennedy, a student of The School of Dancing Wheels.

Production Credits:

President/Founding Artistic Director • Mary Verdi-Fletcher Rehearsal Director • Sara Lawrence-Sucato Lighting Designer • Jaime Benjamin Stage Manager • Jennifer Lehane

Restaging • Sara Lawrence-Sucato, Mary Verdi-Fletcher, Matthew _owman Costume Supervisors • Janet Bolick, Sara Lawrence-Sucato

Original Choreography • Sabatino Verlezza
Original Costume & Set Design • David Guthrie
Original Score • Howard Blake
Original Costume Construction • Janet Bolick
Original Lighting Design • Robert Stegmiller

Place: Winter in the English Countryside, a Long Time Ago



Prologue

The Family:

Da • Bryant Henderson Mum • Sara Lawrence-Sucato Neville • Cody Krause James • Mary Verdi-Fletcher

Scene 1: Snowball Fight in the Yard

James, Neville, Chums, Mum, Da, and The Snowman

Chums:

Edward • Tanya Ewell

Hendrick • Jared Harden

Hadley • Molly Haslag

Preston • Raul Panzar

Sherman • Craig Sams III

Spencer • Celina Speck

Tanner • Marissa Thomas

Winston • Morgan Walker

Scene 2: Boy's Bedroom

James, Mum, Da, and The Snowman

The Snowman • Matthew Bowman

Scene 3: The Yard

James and The Snowman

Scene 4: The Kitchen James and The Snowman

Scene 5: Neville's Nightmare & the Revenge of the Turkey Dinner

Neville, James, and The Snowman

The Turkey Dinner:

Tallulah Turkey • Marissa Thomas Tom Turkey • Jared Harden Theodore Turkey • Celina Speck Tess Turkey • Morgan Walker

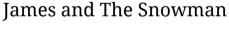


Scene 6: The Attic

James and The Snowman

The Dancing Doll • Molly Haslag







The Bunny Family:

Honey Bunny • Tanya Ewell Money Bunny • Raul Panzar Funny Bunny • Cody Krause

The DePew Sisters:

Petunia DePew • Morgan Walker Lily DePew • Marissa Thomas Rose Depew • Molly Haslag

Mad Bad Leroy Wolf • Jared Harden

The Squirrel • Celina Speck

Scene 8: The Iceberg

James and The Snowman



Glitter • Marissa Thomas Glisten • Morgan Walker Sparkle • Molly Haslag Scintillate • Cody Krause

The Polar Penguins:

Praline Penguin • Morgan Walker
Peter Penguin • Jared Harden
Porter Penguin • Cody Krause
Preston Penguin • Tanya Ewell
Potter Penguin • Raul Panzar
Paul Penguin • Marissa Thomas

Penelope, the Penguin Queen • Molly Haslag

Scene 9: Memory

James, The Snowman, Mum, Da, Neville

Molly Haslag, Celina Speck, Marissa Thomas

Scene 10: Snow Palace Full Cast



"Kids Around the World" performed by The School of Dancing Wheels Performance Ensemble Restaging and Rehearsals by Matthew Bowman and Dominique Patton

Kids Around the World:

Meghan Drops, Ladislas Etzol, Taylor Evans, Catherine Krakowiecki, Jamaica Nida, Geoffrey Peak, Rachel Pestak, Jeannette Thorpe

The Snow Baby • Iris McCormick

Scene 11: The YardJames, Mum, Da, Snowpeople, and The Snowman



Our in-person audience is invited to stay seated for a brief Q&A following the performance.



The Dancing Wheels Company:

Mary Verdi-Fletcher, President/Founding Artistic Director, has been a pioneering force in the development and success of physically integrated dance for 40 years. One of the world's first and foremost professional wheelchair dancers, she has worked and studied with such esteemed artists as Donald McKayle, David Roussève, David Dorfman, Dianne McIntyre, Dennis Nahat, Keith Young, Ben Vereen, Christopher Reeve and many others. Seeing the need for training and career opportunities for dancers of all ability levels, Ms. Verdi-Fletcher created the multi-arts Dancing Wheels School in 1990. Attracting students from around the globe, the school is becoming the worldwide center for physically integrated dance. As an educator, Mary has conducted master classes and lectures and has consulted with notable arts institutions across several continents. She is a Master Teaching Artist in the Dancing Wheels methodology of physically integrated dance and helped develop curriculum for Dancing Wheels Teacher Certification program. Also a tireless arts administrator and advocate, Mary has helped develop state and national programs for arts and disability service organizations and has worked to help to pass significant pieces of legislation. Her efforts have paved the way for others in their quest for full and equal access. Mary's recent professional affiliations include Executive Committee Member for the Careers in Arts Summit, Program Committee Member for The Association of Performing Arts Presenters Annual Conference, Advisory Board Member for The Arc of Greater Cleveland, Board Member for Ohio Arts Presenters, member of the Board of Directors for Professional Flair, Inc., and Organizational Member of Dance USA. In 2014, Mary was awarded the Governor's Award for Arts Education in Ohio, the Ohio Dance Award for major contributions to dance in Ohio and the Henry Viscardi Achievement Awards, which pays tribute to exemplary leaders in the disability community who have had a profound impact on shaping attitudes, raising awareness and improving the quality of life of people with disabilities. Additional awards: Cleveland Arts Prize Lifetime Achievement Award (2016); Girl Scouts of North East Ohio's Woman of Distinction Award (2017); and 2018 Dance/USA Trustees Awardee: Pioneer in the Field of Integrated Dance and Activist for Disability Rights. Mary is featured in New York Times bestseller "In the Company of Women" by author Khushwant Singh and recently in this publication "Boss Ladies of CLE: Stories from 20 Leading Women in Their Own Words" by Maggie Sullivan.

Sara Lawrence-Sucato, Rehearsal Director and Company Dancer, Director of Outreach & Community Engagement, from Columbus, Ohio graduated with honors from Mercyhurst University in Erie, Pennsylvania with a degree in dance. She is in her fifteenth season as a dancer with The Dancing Wheels Company. Sara has performed works by noted choreographers Marc Brew, Nai Ni Chen, David Dorfman, Christopher Fleming, Catherine Meredith, Stuart Pimsler, David Roussève, Ginger Thatcher, Michael Uthoff and Robert Wesner as well as by internationally renowned choreographers Donald McKayle and Dianne McIntyre. In her capacity as The Dancing Wheels Company & School's Director of Outreach & Community Engagement she teaches integrated dance technique in residencies, workshops and masterclasses. Her most recent teaching opportunities have included developing and teaching as a Master Teacher for the Dancing Wheels Teacher Certification program; Dancing Wheels' 2020 Adult Summer Dance Intensive and 2019 Youth Arts Camp; masterclasses at VSA Intersections (Atlanta, Georgia, and Columbus, Ohio), "Counter Balance" Inclusive Dance Festival (Chicago, Illinois), and ACT Conference (Columbus, Ohio); workshops at Ohio Dance Festival (Columbus, Ohio), Oglebay Institute (Wheeling, West Virginia), and Mercyhurst University; and residencies for Cleveland and Northeast Ohio-based organizations including the Center for Arts-Inspired Learning, Cleveland Play House, City of Cleveland's Neighborhood Resource and Recreation Centers (NRRCs), Old Trail School, Laurel School, Clark Elementary, and Julie Billiart School, as well as MOMENTA's "Chance to Dance" (Columbus, Ohio) and Arts Partnership (Findlay, Ohio). Sara is also a company class instructor and has served as company Tour Manager for thirteen years. She was named as company Rehearsal Director in 2019.

Matthew Bowman, Director of the School of Dancing Wheels, Manager of Archives, Marketing, and Social Media, Company Dancer, began formal dance training in 2012 at the Ohio State University. After beginning his training in modern dance under Alexis del Sol and Erik Abbott-Main, he began studying ballet under Joyelle Fobbs (Dance Theatre of Harlem). Concurrent with his training at Ohio State, Matthew participated in summer programs at BalletMet Columbus, American Ballet Theatre in New York City, and a seventeen-day study abroad with OSU Dance in Costa Rica. Matthew had the opportunity to perform in repertory and new works by Ohio State faculty members including Jimmy Ortiz (guest artist, Costa Rica), Susan Hadley, Melanie Bales, and Ann Sofie Clemmensen, as well as graduate student Brandon Whited. After graduating with

a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honors in the Arts and Distinction in Research in Dance, Matthew spent the following year in Columbus, Ohio on faculty at the BalletMet Dance Academy teaching modern dance. Matthew's professional experiences in Columbus include choreographing for Columbus Fashion Week's Finale Runway Show (2014, 2015, 2017), performing with the Columbus Opera Project in Amahl and the Night Visitors, dancing with New Vision Dance Company, Hixon Dance, Carpenter Productions, and premiering Song of the Stars (2016) with Seven Dance Company at the Capitol Theater in Downtown Columbus. Matthew joined The Dancing Wheels Company in June 2016 and has since performed works with the company by such noted choreographers as Mark Tomasic, Marc Brew, David Dorfman, Dianne McIntyre, David Roussève, Catherine Meredith, and Donald McKayle. Matthew is Director of the School of Dancing Wheels, manages the company's marketing and social media, and is in his fifth season as a member of The Dancing Wheels Company.

Tanya Ewell, Company Dancer, hails from Detroit, MI and relocated to Cleveland, OH in 2005. She has eight years' experience in serving at banquet halls for major events such as fundraisers, galas, and weddings. Tanya earned her Certificate for Computer Upgrade and Repair from the Highland Park Career Academy in Michigan and studied Criminal Justice at Remington College in Cleveland. With the Dancing Wheels Company, Tanya has performed in works by esteemed choreographers such as Donald McKayle and Dianne McIntyre. She has worked with and performed pieces by David Dorfman, Heidi Latsky, Catherine Meredith, and David Roussève. Tanya joined The Dancing Wheels Company in 2013.

Jared Harden, Company Dancer, is a dancer, teacher, and theatre artist from Memphis, TN. Jared is a graduate of the University of Memphis with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance Performance (summa cum laude, 2016). Jared began his dance training at the age of 21 and honed his skills in college as well as through various intensive training programs. These programs included the Atlanta Ballet Summer Intensive, Collage Dance Collective Summer Intensive, Ballet Memphis Summer Intensive, and Complexions Contemporary Ballet Winter Intensive. After graduating, Jared joined the staff of Ballet Memphis as a teaching artist through their Community Engagement program. In 2018, he joined Arova Contemporary Ballet (Birmingham, AL) as a company member. His musical

theatre credits include Footloose: The Musical (Garvin, Chuck Understudy), West Side Story (Bernardo), and Cats (Mr. Mistoffeles). Jared has been a member of The Dancing Wheels Company as of March 2020.

Molly Haslag, Company Dancer, began formal dance training in her hometown of Jefferson City, Missouri at age 4. She trained in classical ballet, pointe, contemporary, various modern techniques, jazz, and hip-hop. In 2017, she graduated Summa Cum Laude from Missouri State University (Springfield, MO) with a Bachelor of Science in Dance and a Bachelor of Social Work. Currently, Molly teaches at several dance studios in the Cleveland area including Legacy Dance Academy and The Workshop Dance & Fitness. She also teaches for Dancing Wheels, for both in-studio programs and outreach programs at United Cerebral Palsy and Metrohealth's Cancer Care Center and Prentiss Center. Molly joined The Dancing Wheels Company in 2017.

Cody Krause, Company Dancer, is a recent graduate of The Ohio State University, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance where he focused his degree on Composition/Choreography, with a minor focus in Performance & Choreography. During his time as a performer, he's been a part of many concerts and works including pieces by Merce Cunningham, Doug Varone, and Ohad Naharin, where he was the featured soloist in BalletMet and OSU's Collaboration of "Minus 16." He also has been working on his own choreography, including his self-choreographed solo "Desolate" that was selected for The Ohio State University's "Winter Concert." Before OSU, Cody studied dance at Miss Cindy's School of Dance since the age of 3, where he found his passion for performing and teaching. Cody also attended the Lehigh Valley Charter High School for Arts, where he graduated from in 2015 as a dance major. Cody joined The Dancing Wheels Company in July 2019.

Raul Panzar, Company Dancer, was born and raised in Oakland, California and graduated from UCLA with a bachelor's degree in Philosophy. Raul is a lifelong fan of salsa music, hosting multiple salsa radio programs while in school. Raul's love of music led him to become an amateur wheelchair salsa dancer while working for Yerba Buena Gardens Festival in San Francisco. After 8 years of organizing and promoting concerts, Raul began his professional dance career in 2019 as an apprentice for AXIS Dance Company in Oakland, CA. Raul joined The Dancing Wheels Company as an apprentice in March 2020.

Celina Speck, Company Dancer, born in Leuggern, Switzerland, started dancing at the age of seven. She trained in contemporary, modern, character, and classical ballet in Switzerland at the School of the Opera Zurich. She earned her Bachelor in Contemporary Dance at the University of the Arts in Zurich where she danced in works by Itzik Galili, Barak Marshall, Michael Schumacher, Ihsam Rustem and Adrijana Danchevska. During her studies, she was part of the international dance festival "Steps" which toured Switzerland and Germany. Celina's last year of studies included the opportunity to take an internship in a professional company, and so she has been with Dancing Wheels since 2018.

Marissa Thomas, Tour Manager and Company Dancer, is a dance artist from Cleveland, Ohio. She has recently graduated from The Ohio State University (OSU) with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance, and her studies focused on dance performance, education, and community engagement. She has previously danced with Hixon Dance in Columbus, OH from 2018-2019. Marissa has received her training from Nevada Ballet Theatre, Cleveland School of the Arts, and School of the Cleveland Ballet before going on to study dance at OSU. Marissa has performed works by Merce Cunningham, Crystal M. Perkins, André M. Zachary, Jillian Peña, and Antonio Brown among other artists. Marissa joined Dancing Wheels in 2019.

Morgan Walker, Company Dancer, is a graduate from Kent State University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Dance Performance. She has performed throughout the U.S., Italy, Dominican Republic and toured with Cardell Dance Theater in 2018. After graduating from Kent State with honors, Morgan continued her dance training on scholarship at The Ailey School in New York City. Throughout her time as a performer, she has been a part of many concerts, works, and collaborations including pieces by Ronald K. Brown, Silvana Cardell, Catherine Meredith, Dorotea Saykaly, Shumpei Nemoto, Jamal White, and Ray Mercer, where she was the featured soloist in the premiering contemporary work "Shook!" in NYC. Along with being a full-time company member, Morgan also teaches and choreographs at several dance studios in the Cleveland and Warren areas of Ohio. During her time in the university, two of her own choreographed pieces were selected to perform at the 2017 and 2018 American College Dance Association conferences. For her choreography and performances, she received the Emerging Artist Award and Kent Dance Ensemble Guest Artist Award. Morgan joined The Dancing Wheels Company in August 2019.

Guest Performers:

Bryant Henderson (MFA, BA), Guest Artist, is an artist-educator who specializes in teaching and performing dance forms including jazz, ballet, modern, hip-hop, musical theatre, contemporary dance, and aerial dance. He is a Certified Physically Integrated Dance Teaching artist, guest performer, and choreographer for The Dancing Wheels Company & School. Bryant recently completed a 2-year Visiting Assistant Professorship appointment at Cleveland State University where he served as the Artistic Director for the CSU Dance Company. His choreography and research publications have been presented throughout the United States and recognized by leading professional organizations including the National Dance Education Organization, American College Dance Association, and Journal of Dance Education. Bryant earned his MFA in Dance and Women's & Gender Studies from the University of Oregon, and his BA in Dance and Public Relations from The University of Alabama. Bryant has been a professor and guest artist for several institutions including Wayne State University, Willamette University, Lane Community College, The University of Alabama, Shelton State Community College, and the University of Oregon. Bryant has served as the Assistant Director and Jazz Faculty for the American Ballet Theatre Summer Intensive at Alabama and on the faculty of Boulder Jazz Dance Workshop where he coordinated their Commercial Dance Intensive. Bryant's choreography has been seen throughout Alabama, Oregon, Ohio, appeared at American College Dance Festivals, and in New York City. He has choreographed musicals including Joseph and The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Hair, and Wild Party. Bryant has performed with SYREN Modern Dance, BEings Dance, DEMA Dance, and J. Chen Project in venues including NY's City Center, The Joyce SoHo, NYC Times Square and The Baryshnikov Performing Arts Center. Bryant has also toured the world as a dancer and aerialist for Celebrity Cruises and performed with the aerial-ballet company, AROVA Contemporary Ballet (Birmingham, AL).

IG: @alwayz_b_dancin

Craig Sams III (aka Lil Craig Of 2Reel), Guest Artist Born in Las Vegas, Nevada it's no wonder Lil Craig Of 2Reel has become the entertainer he is today. From performing his own hit songs on stages across the country, to dancing with the professionals of The Dancing Wheels Company. Lil Craig is the CEO/Audio

Engineer and featured Recording Artist of 2Reel Music Entertainment, a record company built upon bringing the world premium music, entertainment, and performances. Lil Craig was born with a disability called Lumbar Sacral Agenesis (also known as Caudal Regression Syndrome) which is a rare birth defect in which the fetal development of the lower spine—the caudal partition of the spine—is abnormal. But despite his challenges, Lil Craig has set out to make a name for himself on many platforms and was recently cast in an upcoming movie directed by the famous Russo Brothers called "Cherry" starring Tom Holland who played Spider-Man in the Avengers movie. You can follow Lil Craig Of 2Reel on Facebook, Instagram, iTunes, Pandora iHeart Radio and Spotify. Or simply visit www.LilCraigOf2Reel.com. He is just simply unbelievable. But as they say at 2Reel Music Entertainment... "If it seems 2Reel...it is"!

Production Staff:

Jaime Benjamin, Lighting Designer is excited to once again light The Snowman for Dancing Wheels where he has designed numerous pieces for the past 15 years. Jeremy currently serves as Director of Theatre at Lorain County Community College and Visiting Lecturer at Oberlin College. Mr. Benjamin teaches Stagecraft, Lighting Design, and theatre history courses. Jeremy has spent the past 30+ years designing lighting for all forms of the performing arts. Mr. Benjamin's lighting designs have been seen at the Beck Center for the Arts, Cincinnati's College Conservatory of Music, the Cleveland Institute of Music Cleveland Contemporary Dance Opera Department, Theatre, Municipal School District, Great Lakes Theater Festival, Ingenuity Festival, Lyric Opera Cleveland, Miami University Summer Theatre, Oberlin Opera Theater, Oberlin Summer Theater Festival, Ohio Dance Theatre, Opera Cleveland, Paramount Productions, Pointe of Departure, and Stages Theatre Houston.

Jennifer Lehane, Stage Manager, works as a stage manager for productions and corporate events in the Cleveland area and around the country. She has worked for Groundworks Dance Theatre, Dancing Wheels, Neos Dance Theatre, the new Cleveland Ballet, Ballet Theatre of Ohio, Ballet Excel, the Heinz Poll Dance Festival, Ohio Dance, the School of Dance at Akron University, and Akron's All City Musical. She has had the great fortune to work with such artists as: Bob Mackie, Dennis Nahat, Donald McKayle, Rudi VanDanzig, and Diane McIntyre.

Jennifer started her stage management career with the Cleveland San Jose Ballet where she supervised rehearsals and performances for numerous productions, including CSJB's national tour of Blue Suede Shoes. She is always thrilled to have the opportunity to work with Dancing Wheels!

Janet Bolick, Costume Designer, has been working with Dancing Wheels for 20 years starting with "The Snowman." She works with many of the local dance companies creating a wide assortment of costumes including ballet, contemporary, competition and ballroom. Some of the companies include Groundworks, Verb Ballets, Neos, Center Stage, Oberlin Dance Department and Viva Ballroom. In her free time, she works with the Cleveland wardrobe union as a dresser or seamstress for the Broadway touring shows and concerts that come into town.

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FEBRUARY 26TH

DANCING WHEELS

TRIVIA NIGHT





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Winter Session 2021: 12 weeks, Jan 4 - Mar 27

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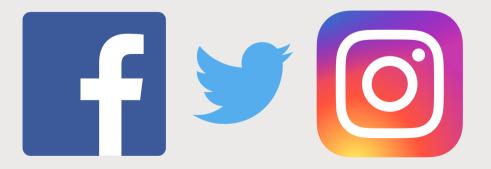
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For more information: dancingwheels.org/dancing-wheels-school (216) 432-0306 ext. 204 school@dancingwheels.org



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