



DANCE

# National Water Dance Project makes a virtual splash via livestream

The biannual event, featuring dancers across the country, is about sharing performance across distances.



Molly Glentzer | April 16, 2020 Updated: April 22, 2020, 11:53 am





Sue Schroeder would prefer to be walking into the Atlantic Ocean beside her Core Dance Company during this year's National Water Dance.

But the biannual environmental movement initiative is always about sharing performance across distances, and the pandemic has not shut it down. Core will perform in livestreamed solidarity with more than 2,000 other dancers from 38 states at 3 p.m. April 18.

An artist-driven collective founded in 2011 by Miami choreographer Dale Andree, the National Water Dance Project assembles a "movement choir" every other year for a simultaneous performance. During alternate years, the project is global. Core performed in Iceland in 2019.

The dances all begin and end with a shared movement phrase that evokes human connection despite the physical distancing, and participating companies create their own, unique middle sections.

Houston's Frame Dance, which Core commissioned to perform in the fountain outside the Houston Museum of Natural Science in 2018, also will be back. Frame founder Lydia Hance had not planned to take part this year because she gave birth to her second child a month ago.

"I was pausing on a lot," she says. "But online, it became a little more manageable. Our teachers are already doing classes online with Zoom." Frame's Water Dance ensemble includes two dancers and two movers from its multigenerational group. Hance expects to be dancing out in her backyard with her toddler, Micah.

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Core turned 40 this season. Its founder and six dancers, who normally divide their time between Houston and Decatur, Ga., had to postpone the Houston premiere of their outdoor work "Manifolds" this month. They also had to rethink their National Water Dance Project.

They had hoped to return to Driftwood Beach on Georgia's Jekyll Island, an area renowned for its dramatic, washed-up tree trunks. Partnering with the Glynn Environmental



in August with area schools to involve the local community in a major event with a safe seafood theme.

“Areas there have toxic fishing, but old line folk still fish there because they don’t know any better,” Schroeder says. When a cargo ship capsized off Jekyll Island in September, the project seemed even more urgent.

With the pandemic and a sudden shift into virtual performance mode, the community work took on another dimension: Core invited people anywhere to participate and ended up planning two livestreams. One features just the company and a tight group of staff and friends. The other will have a larger checkerboard of people who could be joining them from anywhere in the world.

Even for the professionals, rehearsals have been a challenge. “It took us a while to figure out the ‘mirroring’ of bodies on Zoom,” Schroeder says. “There are all these dynamics because you see everything in opposite.”

Her dancers wanted to be near bodies of water, but that posed problems, too. Some of their chosen sites had no phone signals. The solution: “We went inside, and we’re using water vessels,” Schroeder says.

And then there’s the issue of timing. Core will perform its nine-minute dance to music Schroeder commissioned from Berlin-based composer Christian Meyer.

“It will be kind of like an art video,” she says.

To watch, tune into [nwdprojects.org](http://nwdprojects.org), Core Dance’s [Facebook page](#) or Frame Dance’s [Facebook page](#) or [Instagram feed](#) at 3 p.m. April 18.

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Molly Glentzer, a staff arts critic since 1998, writes mostly about dance and visual arts but can go anywhere a good story leads. Through covering public art in parks, she developed a beat focused on Houston's emergence as one of the nation's leading "green renaissance" cities.

During about 30 years as a journalist Molly has also written for periodicals, including Texas Monthly, Saveur, Food & Wine, Dance Magazine and Dance International. She collaborated with her husband, photographer Don Glentzer, to create "Pink Ladies & Crimson Gents: Portraits and Legends of 50 Roses" (2008, Clarkson Potter), a book about the human culture behind rose horticulture. This explains the occasional gardening story byline and her broken fingernails.

A Texas native, Molly grew up in Houston and has lived not too far away in the bucolic town of Brenham since 2012.

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