

Miami Dance Companies Take Part in the National Water Dance This Weekend

CELIA ALMEIDA | APRIL 13, 2018 | 9:30AM



National Water Dance / Photo by Miana Jun

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There is always that moment during any yoga class when one becomes aware of the rhythm, profundity, and frequency of her breath. It is a moment of awareness and consciousness-raising, when the focus is placed on something that happens thousands of times per day but typically goes unnoticed until attention is drawn to it. In a similar fashion, Miami-based choreographer Dale Andree hopes to draw attention to the many plights associated with the water that surrounds Florida through the third-annual National Water Dance.

Dance companies and student dance groups from around South Florida will participate in one iteration taking place at the Biscayne Nature Center in Crandon Park, and they'll be part of a much larger network of troupes participating in communities across the United States. Three dance companies will also participate in the national performance in Puerto Rico.

Andree says that before people can get involved in conservation efforts in their communities, they must reconnect with the water. Much like breath, water plays an indispensable role in everyday life, but as such, its existence is too often taken for granted. "What's familiar becomes forgotten," she says.

"Seeing dance in open spaces is always powerful," says adds. "Seeing art in an open space where it's unexpected brings a new awareness to that space, and then understanding that not only are there dancers in that space performing, but there are dancers all over the country at the same time, and the point is for us to stop a moment and think about the waters that surround us. What are the issues in our area?"

Water Dance participants will perform their choreography atop a sandbar, which Andree hopes will help spectators see the environment in a new light. "The overarching theme is really about opening doors of curiosity. When we see something emerge in an unexpected place, when we see dance out in open spaces... there's a different way of looking at what you're very familiar with. I'm hoping that that reaches into a place of deeper caring, and when you start to really care about something, you start to look and see how you can protect it."

When Andree became involved with the National Water Dance, she aimed to connect arts and education programs throughout the state of Florida, before broadening her scope to groups around the country. The performance not only connects spectators with the natural environment, but also demonstrates to dancers that they can use their talents to voice their advocacy for social movements.

"We have voices... We can be out there using our dance," she says. "As I progressed, [water] became more and more the issue that I felt was at the base of what we're doing. And of course, in Florida, it's everything. Climate change, rising seas, the Everglades – and then you look around the world and it's everything everywhere. It's the most primal aspect of our needs as human beings, as living things."

National Water Dance. *4 p.m. Saturday, April 14, at Marjory Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center, 747 Crandon Blvd., Key Biscayne; nationalwaterdance.org. Admission is free.*

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