

Dale Andree and National Water Dance Perform on Wet Land

“I have fallen in love with the mud.”

BY PAM FERRIS-OLSON

Dale Andree’s emotional connection with Maine lies in the primordial mudflats of the Weskeag River, an inlet of the Penobscot Bay. Twice daily, the ebb tides lay them bare.

This beautiful environment, running along the coastal edge of her South Thomaston property, has inspired Dale, a dance artist and founder of National Water Dance, to create a new dance piece. She and her daughter, Thrynn Saxon, also a professional dancer, recently choreographed, danced, and filmed a dance, entitled *Sodden Ground*, on the water’s edge. As Dale says, “I have fallen in love with the mud.”

Dale’s artistic sensibility has noted changes occurring on and along the mudflats since she took ownership of the South Thomaston property in the early 2000s. She has seen green algae blanket the mudflats, and she has needed to reinforce the bank to withstand erosion. Such signs of environmental change are the basis of the duets that Dale and Thrynn perform. The dances reflect on the generational aspect of climate change—the aspect of “being a mother and passing on to my daughter what my generation—and all before me—have done.”

Dale began dance lessons at an early age. Formal training as a dancer didn’t begin until college. Dale hadn’t originally planned on focusing on dance in college, but her feet carried her to the Boston Conservatory of Music, then New York City, Paris, and Florida. In Florida, she met her husband, a fifth generation Floridian.

The couple settled in the Miami area, yet found themselves being drawn northward to Maine. Dale feels that something deep in their souls pulled at them to buy the house along the Weskeag. Dale loves many things about Maine, including the winter, the ruggedness of the land, and Mainers’ approach

to living. She also prefers what she calls the Wyeth colors of Maine to Miami’s bright sun-bleached color palette.

As founder of National Water Dance, Dale virtually inhabits many more places than Maine and Florida. Through all who participate in National Water Dance, Dale is associated with places in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. Founded as a national project in 2014, National Water Dance is a biennial event that connects dancers on a specific day and time to simultaneously share a personal dance performance that expresses their feelings about the dangers their local waterways face.

Dale organized her first movement choir for the state of Florida. Through this project, she was building the community for National Water

Dance, at the same time that Marylee Hardenbergh was building her community, Global Site Performance, a program that connects dancers from across the globe in outdoor dance performances. Both Hardenbergh and Andree choreograph onsite rather than for the confined space of a theater. They believe that the dances can heighten the awareness of audi-

ences to their world and encourage action on environmental issues. They were building these like-minded dance and environmental communities simultaneously, which Dale describes as exciting and positive creative developments.

Dale is currently working on a piece in Florida’s mangroves, on a dance named “Such Rooted Things.” It is part of a commissioned work separate from National Water Dance, and it is premiering soon at the Pérez Art Museum in Miami.

Dale accepts Maine in all seasons. Even in the summer, when the mosquitoes and black flies occasionally annoy, Dale offers residencies for dancers in her home. These residencies are retreats for fellow artists to dance in the studio above the



Photo courtesy Dale Andree

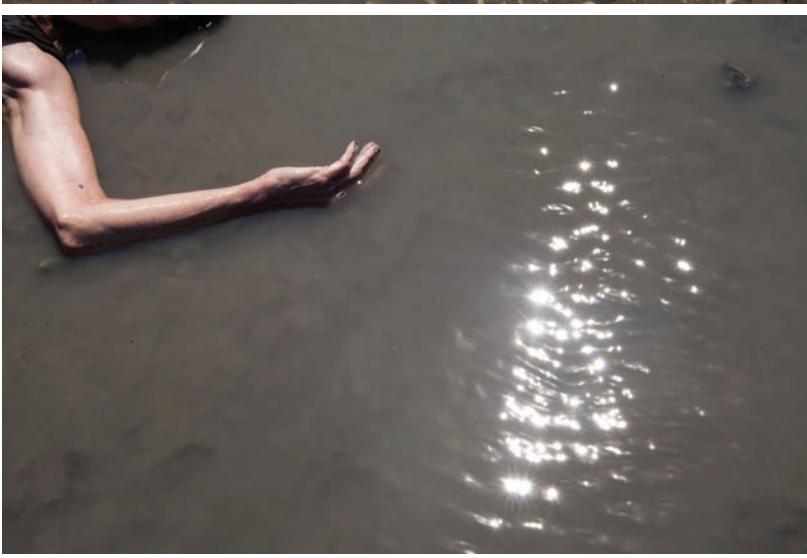
Sodden Ground, with dancers Dale Andree and Thryn Saxon.



Photo by Miana Jun



Photo by Miana Jun



Mangrove video by Mateo Zapata Serna

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Photo by Miana Jun

garage, interact with other dancers, and focus solely on dance. In addition to sharing time and space with fellow dancers, they have the chance to preview their evolving works with the local community. It's a wonderful give-and-take experience.

She finds herself spending more time in Maine. It's where she can freely live her dreams: to live in a place of great natural beauty, one that inspires her to create work, and to be able to share the creative work

with her community. With an appealingly wide-eyed expression, Dale confesses, "I really feel at home in the mud."

For more information about Dale Andree, National Water Dance, and to see the video Sodden Ground, please visit www.nwdprojects.org. Dale discusses dance and shares a clip from her in progress dance in Florida's mangroves on Women Mind the Water, Featured Guests, www.womenmindthewater.com.

National Water Dance—Maine Dancers



Molly Gawler, 36, Orland, professional dancer. In 2020 Molly performed solo at Sandy Point, in Stockton Springs and plans to participate in 2022. Molly wants to foster awareness of clean water: "Water is universal—we all share water and the need for access to good clean water."

Kay Mann, 62, Brunswick, outreach director for a solar company. In 2020, she performed with Nancy Salmon and Gina Hesse along the Kennebec River in Bath. Kay plans to participate in 2022. Kay, whose roots to a Maine island date back five generations, believes that Maine's indigenous peoples were stewards of the water for many thousands of years "without doing a fraction of the harm that has been done in the past few hundred years."



Nancy Salmon, 73, Freeport, retired, Bates Dance Festival Assistant Director, and adjunct dance/theater faculty. Nancy and Kay have danced together for years. Nancy, who says she grew up visiting the Outer Banks of North Carolina, has a deep appreciation for water and the environment.



National Water Dance—Maine is open to everyone. For additional information, visit www.nwdprojects.org/smparticipation.