

One River Mississippi

Report from the Artistic Director

Issue No. 1: November 18, 2005

onerivermississippi.org

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Welcome from Marylee Hardenbergh, Artistic Director

Welcome to the first issue of our One River Mississippi Newsletter. As the Artistic Director of the project, I will be creating these newsletters to update you about our project. It is very exciting for me to see how this project has grown since its inception over three years ago. We now have seven sites to participate simultaneously along the Mississippi River .

With twenty years of experience in creating outdoor site-specific dances, I visited each site and worked with the local choreographers to select the “found stage” and to ascertain the best vantage point for the audience. Everyone who comes to the performance will see the Mississippi River at one of seven different sites, thus connecting the huge community that lives along its banks.

The fund-raising, spearheaded by Julie Andrus, a board member of my company, has been astounding. All of the choreographers have been on contract for over a year, and the project managers have been hired. Our plans are well on track, and we are moving forward with fiery-spirited commitment.

Visit our website (<http://onerivermississippi.org>) to view more about our incredible project that combines art, ecology and community.

Choreographers' Summit in Memphis

The choreographers met for three days in Memphis this fall in order to create the very important element of group cohesion. It was the first time that we had all met each other, and the weekend was extremely successful in accomplishing its goals. We had fun, and we worked hard. We created a public improvisation, dancing along hundreds of yards of a reproduced river, at the Mississippi River Park . We also had excellent discussions about the music and the structure of the dance performance, and most importantly, we felt like a close-knit team by the end.



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Effects of Hurricane Katrina on One River Project

Two of our seven sites are in Louisiana: New Orleans and Venice/Fort Jackson in Plaquemines Parish. There are two choreographers from New Orleans, Barbara Hayley and Monique Moss. Barbara is Chair of the Theater and Dance Department at Tulane, a Fulbright Scholar, and she choreographs, travels and performs in Russia. She is safe back at home in New Orleans, and she is adamant about having the One River Mississippi performance take place in New Orleans. She is keen to include other artists and musicians, using the June performance to draw groups back together who have not performed since the hurricane.

Monique Moss is a gifted performer and choreographer. Monique and her family have found refuge in Flagstaff, Arizona; their neighborhood in New Orleans is devastated. I am confident that extra funds can be found to fly Monique back to New Orleans and to provide her with a per diem so that she can be a fully engaged choreographer as planned. Monique said that this project has taken on a much deeper importance for her now, and she is very happy that she can work as a choreographer for our June performance. I feel very lucky to have both Monique and Barbara on the project.



The chosen performance site in New Orleans, pictured at left with Monique in foreground, is land right on the river for which the Center for Bioenvironmental Research at Tulane and Xavier Universities has plans. It is an asphalt expanse of land with some very exciting urban structure around it — just what I myself love to sink my artistic teeth into! The site itself is fine and dry. View more photos of the project on our website.

The original second Louisiana site is still under water and roads leading to it from New Orleans are still impassable. Our choreographer, the peerless Angela Hammerli, distinguished professor at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, tells me that the local residents of Plaquemines Parish (there are parishes in Louisiana instead of counties) clearly wanted the performance to take place at Fort Jackson, right on the river. Angela is working with Kerry St. Pe, the Director of the Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program, to find an alternative site for our performance that is in the same parish, and discussions are underway to hold the performance at a plantation right on the Mississippi. Although the hurricane has set our plans back, we are positive that there will be a seventh performance and that the One River Mississippi event will be able to bring both healing and celebration to this southernmost land of the nation's largest river.

With my best wishes,
Marylee Hardenbergh

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