

One River Mississippi

Report from the Artistic Director

Issue No. 7: May 21, 2006

onerivermississippi.org

Just 34 days left until Performance Day

June 24 2006 ~ 7pm

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Note from the Director

Things are definitely heating up around here! Visions are becoming reality. Requests for press photos and interviews are coming in. Professional sound companies that we've hired at each of the seven sites are working out the details for creating sound for the vast spaces. For those far away, you may listen to the broadcast streaming live on several of our seven radio stations. Stay tuned to our web site for updates.



Requests for press photos, such as this from Ballet Quad Cities, are coming in.

aks, with hopes for The Duck, an amphibious vehicle. New Orleans and Plaquemines Parish will both feature water-spouting fireboats!



[Itasca](#)

[Twin Cities](#)

[Quad Cities](#)

[St. Louis](#)

[E. St. Louis](#)

[Memphis](#)

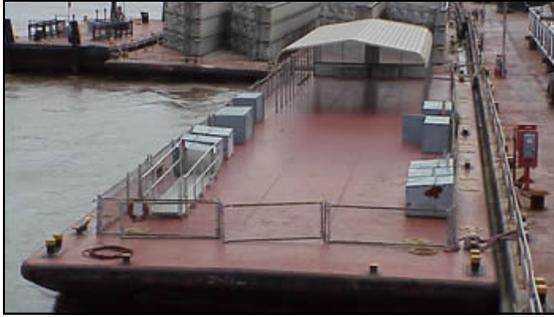
[New Orleans](#)

[Plaquemines](#)

[Parish](#)



We now have boats for each of the performances. In Itasca, kayaks and canoes will grace the "stage" and in Minneapolis we also have kayaks and a new houseboat sporting a dancer on top. The Quad Cities are choreographing with a barge, pleasure craft, water-skiers and canoes. In St. Louis, we have recently received word that there will indeed be a towboat. (Thank you Paul Rohde!) It will bring dancers on the US Army Corps of Engineers' Barge 53 to the Eads Bridge, complementing the cruisers already participating. In Memphis, the aqua choreography includes the Memphis Queen, canoes and kay-



Barge 53, above at dock and decorated for a 2003 event, will be featured in the St. Louis performance

Meeting the Choreographers

Now, in this seventh newsletter issue, is the perfect time to introduce the seven sites' choreographers. People often ask me how I found all of these wonderful choreographers. I thank my lucky stars for the stellar team that comprises the artistic backbone of this project. Following is a brief account of how I met each of them. To learn more about these women and their accomplishments, you can read their bios on our web site; all are listed in "Artists/Choreographers" under their own site. Here they are from North to South:

Itasca

Elaine Hanson was dancing in St. Cloud, Minnesota when I met her. I was creating a Pilot Project in two separate cities in July 2003. I wanted to do a dry run along the Mississippi River, placing dancers on bridges in each site, and to see how two distant radio stations would do at playing the same music at the same moment. In looking for dancers in both St. Cloud and Little Falls, we found Elaine. She danced beautifully and had great ideas. Then it transpired that she was about to move up near Itasca, so presto! She was our gal for the Headwaters. Coincidentally, she had already choreographed a dance at Lake Itasca years ago.



Elaine Hanson at Itasca

Minneapolis

Bernadette Knaeble danced on a skyscraper for me in 1988 before she moved to New York City, where I would stay with her sometimes while she was teaching at the Erick Hawkins studio. When she returned back here a few years ago, I immediately roped her in to choreographing for our annual Mississippi River dance. This will be her third year choreographing for the river.



Jenny Moore was, several years ago, a new face on the Minneapolis Dance Therapist scene, and I scooped her right up to help me with the Mother's Day Dance in 1998. Her abilities in assisting and her spiritual focus have been invaluable ever since.



Bernadette Knaeble (above) and Jenny Moore (left) at Minneapolis

The Quad Cities

Johanne Jakhelln came on board through a phone call to Ballet Quad Cities, whom I found through the Internet, after deciding to switch our third site from Dubuque to Davenport. After I described the project, Director Joedy Cook sent me videos for my grant proposals, and thus Johanne, their Artistic Director, was in! I did not actually set eyes on Johanne until January 2005, when I drove down for a meeting

with the environmentalists in the area. There was an unforgettable blizzard that day, but almost everyone trudged to the meeting anyway!

St. Louis

Beckah Voigt I met on my very first trip to St. Louis. I had convened a meeting of environmentalists there in May 2004 to see how our project might dovetail with their goals. Prior to going, I had looked in my handy-dandy American Dance Therapy Association membership booklet. Ah! There was one dance therapist in St. Louis: Caroline Leibman. I called her and she graciously invited me over as soon



Beckah Voigt at St. Louis

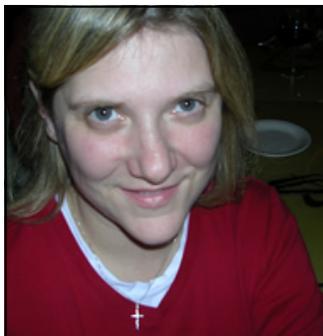
as I landed. We had the most elegant tea in her walled garden – delicate and delicious. She ran me through several dancers she knew in her community, replete with their telephone numbers. Then she said that she thought this would be right up Beckah’s alley! The next day Beckah agreed to squeeze me in to her busy teaching schedule, and I knew it was a go from the moment I saw her.

Sarah Anne Patz, also on Caroline’s list, was a great addition because of her outdoor performing experience. Sarah Anne, Beckah and I scheduled a rendezvous near our site of the Eads Bridge, underneath the famous Arch. We had a glorious time walking out on onto the bridge, and dreaming about what magic could take place during the performance.



Johanne Jakhelln at Quad Cities

Memphis



Kimberly Baker at Memphis

Kimberly Baker – well, remember that handy dandy American Dance Therapy Association membership booklet?? I looked up Memphis and once again there was one person listed. I called Kimberly and asked if she could meet me. I drove the 4 hours from St. Louis, and arrived in Memphis just in time to see a performance by Kimberley’s Our Own Voice Theater Troupe. Kimberly arranged for me to meet some other professional dancers and landscape architects. She had just had a baby, she was a stand-in for one of the lead dancers who was sick, and she arranged that meeting for me after the performance. Does that give you a hint about her capable energy level?



Sara Anne Patz at St. Louis

New Orleans

Barbara Hayley was one of the faculty members invited to a meeting I had with the Center for Bioenvironmental Research in New Orleans. The Director of the Mississippi River Basin Alliance in New Orleans had encouraged me to get in touch with Doug Meffert of the CBR when I was down there for a meeting at an Environmental Conference in February 2004. Doug and I scheduled a meeting, and he invited faculty from Tulane’s Department of Theater and Dance because they had all worked together before. When I walked into the room, Barbara and I looked at each other and said, “Hey, don’t we know each other from Russia?” We had both been performing and teaching at a dance festival in Yaroslavl, Russia a few years ago!



Barbara Hayley at New Orleans

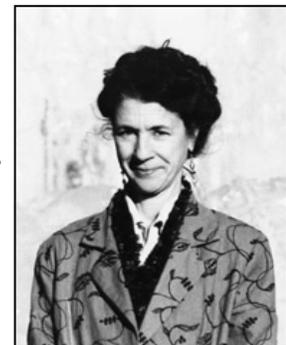
Monique Moss was invited to the project by Barbara; they were both teaching at Tulane. I didn't actually meet Monique until she attended a meeting in New Orleans in October 2004, set up by Susan Kierr Dyer, who is yet another dance therapist. (I actually knew her before the handy-dandy booklet came out.) Susan had introduced me to Larry Schmidt, Director of the Trust for Public Land, and he graciously gave us their meeting room. The meeting was facilitated beautifully by Kay Radlauer, and the choreographers and environmentalists bonded nicely. Then in June 2005, Monique and I looked over the performance sites, shown here.



Monique Moss at the visit to performance sites in New Orleans

Plaquemines Parish

Angela Hammerli was another happy outcome of the October '04 meeting at the Trust for Public Lands in New Orleans. One of the environmental attendees was from BTNEP – the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program. She had driven up from Nicholls State University and told us she knew the perfect choreographer for the site down in the bayou. Angela and I spoke on the phone, and she signed on. We did not meet face to face until I flew down to go visit the site with her in June 2005.



Angela Hammerli at Plaquemines Parish

It has been my great fortune to have somehow gathered this exceptional group of choreographers. Needless to say, they are all working very intensively at this time on creating wonderful choreography for their sites.

Inviting the Officials

We are sending out formal, gorgeous initiations to 74 officials. There are 10 states that are along the river, so each of those Governors is getting one; that leaves 64. All of those states' Senators and all of the sites' Mayors are receiving these initiations. What brings up our numbers considerably is that we are inviting all of the 32 Members of Congress from those jurisdictions which touch the Mississippi River.



Invitation to the Governor of Wisconsin

Blessing the Water

At each site, A Blessing of the Water will occur. Some blessings will be in the form of spoken prayer, such as that by the Dakota Elder who will say a prayer in his language in Minneapolis. In addition, we have a team of Reiki Practitioners who will also bless the water silently at each site. Please visit the web site in the next week to see these site-specific Reiki practitioners.

Handing out Programs

We are creating paper booklet programs to be handed out at each performance. While the cover and some pages are the same for the entire project, the inner contents of the programs are site-specific. Readers at each site will find a site map or aerial photo, showing them where to look for the dancers and

