

Media Release
For Immediate Release
February 19, 2015

The Last Waltz for Dusk Dances in Haliburton

When the legendary rock roots group "The Band" held their final performance in 1976 they called it 'The Last Waltz'. It turns out that the final performance of Dusk Dances in Head Lake Park on Sunday, July 20th 2014 was also 'The Last Waltz' for Dusk Dances in Haliburton. After eight years of unique performances, the local committee is hanging up its dancing shoes.

The first Dusk Dances event in Haliburton was in 2006. No one who was there will forget the astounding opening act of 'Falling' with Ayelen Liberona emerging from a cocoon suspended from a willow tree above the Drag River and descending with spell-binding acrobatic grace on two ribbons of silk into the river. Or the 'Flock of Flyers' a mad cap and intricately choreographed performance of a Canadian flying squadron with no planes.

That same year featured the first local piece 'The Hat' choreographed by Daniela Pagliaro and with a cast of local performers from the ages of 8 to 20. The piece was so popular that they were invited to perform at the Dusk Dances flagship event in Withrow Park in Toronto the following year. It was a phenomenal tip of the hat to the talents of our local youth. Eight years later a number of these young performers have launched successful careers as performers and ongoing involvement in the arts.

Since that time there have been five local choreographers and over 140 local children and youth and adults involved in performances. Dusk Dances in Haliburton also provided new creative opportunities for the visiting professional dancers.

When dancers Mairead Filgate, Brodie Stephenson and Zhenya Cerneacov saw local kids doing flips off the bridge into the river it inspired them to create the Throwdown Collective and create the dance piece 'One Couch' (They used a couch instead of bridge as the springboard for their acrobatics). This led to the creation of 'Box Set' and their 2014 piece '1986 FM' in which a 1981 Chevy Malibu served as the centrepiece.

Dancers/choreographers Meredith Thomson and Kate Franklin were so inspired by the involvement of our local community in the Dusk Dances event that they proposed creating a piece that involved community members of all ages performing with professional dancers. The local committee commissioned the creation of the piece 'Incandescent'. This work has now been performed across Canada.

So, after so many years of success, why “The Last Waltz”.

“This was not an easy decision.” said Jim Blake, chair of the local organizing committee. “Dusk Dances has been a tremendous event in our community for eight years. But it has also taken an enormous amount of energy to make it possible. Each year it has become a bit more expensive and more complicated to run. And each year it has become more of a challenge for us to raise the funds required and find the time needed throughout the year to put it all together. In early September we heard from Dusk Dances Inc (the organization that licenses the event and brings the professional performers to Haliburton) that their fees would be going up substantially for 2015. Because Dusk Dances Inc owns the rights for all Dusk Dances events there was no way for us to make changes or to simplify and still call it a Dusk Dances event. So we decided to end on a high note. We had wonderful audiences this year and we broke even with our budget. ‘The Band’ had 8 successful years and so did we.”

“It has been a great run” said Lynda Shadbolt, Dusk Dances Haliburton volunteer coordinator . “Every year we have been delighted with the performances, the size and enthusiasm of our audiences and the wonderful support from the community. We have had an incredible group of volunteers who have helped out each night of the show with set-up and take down, hosting, ushering, and security. With that much energy in this community I am confident that something new, creative and engaging will emerge”

Amy Brohm, who has overseen the marketing for Dusk Dances Haliburton the last few years observed: “A lot of us on the committee have children who have performed in Dusk Dances. What an incredible opportunity it has been for our kids to be involved in creating performances that engage large audiences and to work alongside professional dancers. It has been a rewarding experience for our kids and for the visiting dancers. In 2012, I got to perform with my son in ‘Incandescent’ and then in 2013 I had a role in the ‘Dance of the Derby Girls’.”

The original idea for Dusk Dances was developed by Sylvie Bouchard in 1993 in Trinity Bellwoods Park in Toronto and it took off from there.

Ten years ago, Dusk Dances Inc was looking at how they could replicate their success in Toronto in smaller centres across Ontario and acquired funding to go to five communities for three years. They had heard about the active arts community in Haliburton and thought it might be a good fit. The Haliburton Sculpture Forest was the original sponsoring organization. Dusk Dances in Head Lake Park immediately became a popular event. Of the 5 communities that got involved in 2006 Haliburton is the only one that found the resources to keep going once the initial funding was finished. In 2009 a separate committee ‘Dusk Dances Haliburton’ was formed under the auspices of the Haliburton County Community Co-operative to produce the local event.

One of the goals of Dusk Dances is to give new audiences an opportunity to experience professional contemporary dance and to give an opportunity for local choreographers to create new works for large audiences.

“What a great professional opportunity for me and the other local choreographers who created pieces performed by local youth and community members.” said Daniela Pagliaro, local artistic director. “I had the great fortune to work with a tremendous group of kids in the first year in ‘The Hat’ and then in 2013. I worked with members of our local Roller Derby team and dancer Kate Franklin to create the “Dance of the Derby Girls”.

Another goal of Dusk Dances was to engage people of all ages as performers, volunteers and audience members.

“I sit on a lot of committees as part of my job but I chose to volunteer on the Dusk Dances Haliburton Committee because it is such a fantastic community event.” said Sandra Dupret, principal of Fleming College, Haliburton Campus. “My son, daughter and husband have all performed in Dusk Dances and they have all been volunteers. How often does it happen that a whole family can be involved in something which is so inspiring.”

Barb Fraser, committee secretary added; “We are grateful for and wish to thank all the volunteers, donors, sponsors, funders, choreographers, technicians, dancers, and advertisers that have helped us in so many ways to bring Dusk Dances to our community. And of course we want to thank our wonderful audiences – the people who have been coming every year, the folks who came in wheelchairs and with walkers, the families who have planned their holidays to be here when Dusk Dances is on, and the people who just happened upon the event on a stroll through the park.”

“We will continue to look at ways we can get the community involved and excited about creative outdoor events that involve people of all ages and capture the imagination. We will keep you posted.”

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