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MEDIA KIT

Dolphin Dance Project

“when we approach wild dolphins with dance, they recognize it as intelligence”

NYC dancer/choreographer Chisa Hidaka, MD and producer/partner Benjamin Harley founded the Dolphin Dance Project (www.dolphin-dance.org) in 2009 to bring together talented human dancers and wild dolphins to co-create underwater dances in the open ocean and films that document them. Uniquely beautiful images of these graceful interchanges offer viewers the extraordinary experience of participating in an intimate movement-based conversation with completely wild dolphins in whose eyes we recognize shared intelligence, creativity and rich, meaningful emotional lives. The Dolphin Dance Project aims to inspire respect for and protection of wild dolphins and their habitats and to transform how audiences understand their relationship to nature in general. “These human-dolphin dances are extraordinary, precious opportunities to challenge common beliefs that humans are separate from nature,” says Chisa, “I think the experience inevitably and powerfully moves us to feel a deep sense of responsibility not only to dolphins but to all our planet’s creatures as we make everyday decisions that affect them and the environments in which they live.”

Together: Dancing with Spinner Dolphins

“award-winning debut film”

The award-winning debut film, ‘*Together: Dancing with Spinner Dolphins*’ (3 min 33 sec, 2010 <http://dolphin-dance.org/together>), depicts a woman and a wild Spinner Dolphin forging a tender relationship through the shared language of dance. Finished through funding from Dance Films Association, ‘*Together*’ won Best Experimental Film at its premier at the Big Apple Film Festival, and in 2012, Best Short Film for Animal Advocacy at the Artivist Film Festival in NYC. It has been screened at over 25 US and international dance and environmental film festivals as well as several pro-cetacean events and rallies in the US, UK and Japan, and serves as the centerpiece of educational presentations at universities, dive clubs and other venues. In addition to ‘*Together*’ the Dolphin Dance Project has published online several short video clips, essays and other materials that promote the protection of dolphins and reveal intriguing aspects of human-dolphin dance interactions.

Dolphin Dreams: Dancing with Spotted Dolphins

“first human-dolphin dance film for the IMAX screen”

Currently in post-production, ‘*Dolphin Dreams: Dancing with Spotted Dolphins*,’ will guide audiences from fantasy to reality, from a shared dream of human-dolphin communication to concrete examples of mutual understanding and trust. Shot in the gorgeous turquoise waters of the Caribbean Ocean with a charismatic pod of Atlantic Spotted Dolphins by legendary underwater cinematographer Howard Hall, ‘*Dolphin Dreams*’ will be the first IMAX quality human-dolphin dance film. Grammy-award winning composer and cellist David Darling is

contributing the original score, commissioned by the New York State Council of the Arts. A clip from the new work can be seen here: <http://vimeo.com/31757911>

The Feature Film: *Reunion*

“dolphins are people too”

To allow a wide audience to appreciate the profound implications of the voluntary exchanges between wild dolphins and humans, a feature length documentary will integrate breath-taking dance imagery with insights from the dancers, leading scientists, and ethicists. Although living far from shore, a relatively isolated pod of Atlantic Spotted dolphins has been closely observed by a few scientists and boat captains for 30 years. The story of the dolphins’ families and personalities, and the evolution of their relationship with humans, makes the science of dolphin cognitive and creative capacities uniquely personal.

Recent scientific studies about the brains and behavior of dolphins corroborates the experience of the dancers that dolphins are individuals who are able to make intelligently considered choices about how they interact with each other and with humans. As we recognize that dolphins share the same qualities that make humans into ‘persons’, we are left to contemplate the implication for how we relate to nature in general.

The Dolphin Dance Project is actively seeking out grantors and financial partners to support the production of *‘Reunion’* - a feature film that promises to be rich with beauty, grace, and mind-opening new perspectives.

Dolphin Etiquette

The Dolphin Dance Project only works with wild dolphins in the open ocean, on the dolphins’ terms. We never feed dolphins, nor attempt to coerce or train them in any way. As a rule, the dolphins approach us out of their own curiosity. We do our best to be well-informed about the most current scientific research on the natural behavior of dolphins so that we can interact with them in ways that are safe and appropriate for humans and dolphins. We understand that we are visitors in the dolphins’ environment and we never attempt to interact with dolphins if they are resting or feeding or show any signs of disinterest or annoyance.

We approach dolphins in a very specific and disciplined manner that is informed by our scientific understanding of dolphins and our specific artistic training and goals. It is dancing, not swimming. Viewers should not expect similar interactions with captive dolphins or even wild dolphins that are encountered on swim-with-dolphin tours. To avoid building undue tourism pressure on wild dolphins, we avoid disclosing the locations of our encounters.

Our films give the viewer an opportunity to experience vicariously what would otherwise require significant training, expertise and expense. We hope they will inspire our audience to learn more about dolphins and to want to protect them. To that end, we provide a webpage for important information about the threats to wild dolphins and what we can do to resolve or minimize them: <http://www.dolphin-dance.org/protect>

Biographies

Chisa Hidaka, MD (co-founder, artistic director/choreographer)

Inquiry and discovery are the themes that ties together the varied experiences of Chisa Hidaka, MD, Artistic Director/Choreographer of the Dolphin Dance Project. Described by the NY Times as 'dancing as if possessed,' Chisa began her career in modern dance while attending Barnard College, where she received her BA in Dance in 1986. She has worked for over 25 years as a dancer, choreographer and dance educator as well as musculoskeletal research scientist, and is still active in the NYC downtown dance improvisation community. With an MD from the Weill Medical College of Cornell University, Chisa has also been on the faculty at the Hospital for Special Surgery since 2001 pursuing research in orthopedics. Bringing together her medical/science and dance training, Chisa teaches Applied Anatomy at the Barnard College and Manhattanville College Dance Departments. Through the Dolphin Dance Project, Chisa also brings together her dance and science expertise. She brings to bear her extensive training in improvised dance to interact with wild dolphins through aesthetic choices that are respectful of the dolphins' voluntary participation as equal partners in the creative process. She uses her scientific background to collaborate with dolphin scientists to investigate whether dance can be used as a model to study inter-species communication.

"Dancing with wild dolphins is a great privilege. The dolphins I've met are incredibly creative and so generous and trusting to share their lives with me. I'm incredibly grateful for the many beautiful moments I've shared with the amazing dolphins. I hope I can share them with our audiences with the respect and honor they deserve."

Benjamin Harley (co-founder, producer)

Dolphin Dance Project co-founder and producer Benjamin Harley started diving at fifteen, studied anthropology, philosophy, and theatre at Yale University, and fell in love with dance. During a productive career providing strategic advice to large corporations and startups in media and technology, he travelled extensively, living in Europe and Asia. For the last 8 years, he has studied intensively the art of dance contact improvisation. He brings to the DDP his experience growing successful organizations, his passion to create beautiful films that transform how people understand themselves, and his deep appreciation of the power of dance.

"When Chisa shared with me her first inspiration, I was instantly captivated by the prospect of two intelligent species finding a common ground through dance to not only communicate but to create a work of art. It is compelling in so many ways - to nature film audiences, as a uniquely beautiful artwork, reconfiguring expectations about the relationship between humans and dolphins and the world. In my own experience, meeting the gaze of a dolphin and recognizing it as a true equal has been a transformative experience, profoundly reordering my relationship with nature as a whole. When we humans use our big brains, not to dominate the world around us, but to live in ever increasing harmony with the natural web from which we were born and on which we depend, then our intelligence will be proved. After waiting 15 million years for intelligent company, I think dolphins and whales are yet to be convinced."