

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL
SOURCE TO SOUND: A HOUSATONIC RIVER PROJECT

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival has long been part of the cultural life of Berkshire County, providing audiences from the Berkshires and beyond an opportunity to experience all aspects of the dance form: from the creation of new works to the development of dancers and aspiring choreographers to an overview of the history of dance in America. Yet the Pillow extends far beyond the 125-acre campus in Becket. Jacob's Pillow is a fundamental part of the public school system of north and south Berkshire County, in addition to the national cultural landscape as a peer to major arts institutions across the country. Beyond this dual role as a member of the local community and as a national champion for dance, the Pillow maintains a concern for the physical setting of our community, the place where we live and work. To this end, Jacob's Pillow has begun a dialogue with a range of communities and artists around the Housatonic River, a 150-mile natural landmark that flows through western Massachusetts and Connecticut. Over the course of 1992 and 1993, the river will be explored as a metaphor linking one community to another, industry to resident, nature to human intervention, past to present.

THE PROJECT

Source to Sound: A Housatonic River Project will consist of a series of public art works and projects in a variety of media specifically created for sites and communities stretching from the source of the river at Waconah Falls to Stratford, CT, where the river meets Long Island Sound. Local coalitions of artists, environmentalists, school districts, historical societies, foundations, and other community members will be engaged in building a celebration and examination of the Housatonic. The resulting project will take many forms, including performance opportunities in such non-traditional settings as a nature preserve, a city park, a school gymnasium, a local church, a much-used truck stop, or a series of bridges. These works need not be static; nature walks, canoe trips, river crossings, and public actions are viable possibilities as the vehicle for expression. The creation of a travelling exhibition, publications, and other documentary components will also be included. The Housatonic River Project will be developed by Jacob's Pillow in collaboration with choreographer and Bennington College Dean of Faculty Susan Sgorbati and a consortium of community representatives throughout western Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Jacob's Pillow brings to the Housatonic River Project a national perspective on artistic work that integrates community experience with artistic innovation coupled with the ability to produce events from a broad variety of aesthetic and cultural viewpoints. The objectives of the river project are to heighten awareness of the Housatonic River in the lives of the people who encounter it daily, and to raise issues of importance to the contemporary artist and the community at large. Jacob's Pillow will act as the conduit for a dialogue among a number of facets of the community toward these goals.

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL HOUSATONIC RIVER PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival has long been part of Berkshire County, providing audiences from the Berkshires and beyond an opportunity to experience all aspects of the dance form: from the creation of new works to the development of dancers and aspiring choreographers to an overview of the history of dance in America. Jacob's Pillow is also a fundamental part of the public school system of north and south county in addition to the national cultural landscape as a peer to major arts institutions across the country. Beyond this dual role as a member of the local community and as a national champion for dance, the Pillow maintains a concern for the physical setting of our community, the place where we live and work. In the fall of 1992, Jacob's Pillow will undertake a unique project centered around the Housatonic River, a 150-mile natural landmark in Berkshire county, western Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Over the course of the fall and winter of 1992-93, the river will be explored as a metaphor linking one community to another, industry to resident, nature to human intervention, past to present.

THE PROJECT

The Housatonic River Project will consist of a series of commissioned public art works in a variety of media specifically created for sites stretching from the source of the river at Waconah Falls to Stratford, CT, where the river meets Long Island Sound. Local coalitions of artists, environmentalists, school districts, historical societies, foundations, and other community members will be engaged in building a celebration and examination of the Housatonic. The resulting project will take many forms, including performance opportunities in such non-traditional settings as a nature preserve, a city park, a school gymnasium, a local church, a much-used truck stop, or a series of bridges. These works need not be static; nature walks, canoe trips, river crossings, and public actions are viable possibilities as the vehicle for expression. The creation of a travelling exhibition, publications, and other documentary components will also be included. The Housatonic River Project will be developed by Jacob's Pillow in collaboration with choreographer and Bennington College Dean of Faculty Susan Sgorbati and a consortium of community representatives throughout western Massachusetts and Connecticut.

For the purposes of planning and organizing this event, the river has been divided into three zones, reflecting the environs along the river, including pastoral, rural farms,

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heavy to light industry, and "thickly settled" communities. The project directors have identified up to 20 community leaders in each zone and have contacted these potential participants to enlist their expertise and interest.

In October of 1991, a series of three community meetings took place in Lee, MA, New Milford, and Shelton, CT that served as an orientation to the project's goals and as a forum to recruit interested community members. From these sessions and further contacts in the region, an alliance of individuals and organizations who have a demonstrated interest in the river and its environs will be created around the project to raise issues and themes that the project may address. These individuals will act as a resource to identify potential artists and collaborate on specific works, provide background material on relevant issues or the historical context, and act as hosts to events developed with that constituency.

Ideally, the Housatonic River Project will consist of an equal number of projects initiated from within the region and those curated from a national pool of aesthetically diverse artists. Artistic excellence and ingenuity, the desire to work collaboratively, and a variety of fresh approaches to site specific work will each be considered in determining the content of the River Project.

The objectives of the river project are to heighten awareness of the Housatonic River in the lives of the people who encounter it daily, and to raise issues of importance to the contemporary artist and the community at large. Jacob's Pillow will act as the conduit for a dialogue among a number of facets of the community at large.

