As the city, state, and country were navigating the effects of COVID-19 this spring, Team New Dances exercised its creative muscle, moving to a virtual audition for Chicagoland-based dancers to join the New Dances 2020 company and then to virtual open company classes, rehearsals, and, ultimately, performances.

This summer, as our city and our country struggled with tragic events and serious issues at a time during which many were especially vulnerable due to pandemic-related health, financial, and emotional tolls, Team New Dances, led by Melissa Thodos and Julie Nakagawa, embraced the opportunity to lean into the power of arts.

"This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal."

- Toni Morrison

And we dance.

Testimonials and Expressions of Gratitude:

"To all the donors that made these free classes possible, we appreciate your support of the dance community. It is awesome that you have given us a chance to take class at a time when it is difficult to pay for company classes like this. Thank you!"

- Monte, Company Class Participant

"I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to be part of an artistic process again and flex my creative muscles."

"A rewarding experience was discovering I could bring more to the table as an artist. I have always wanted to incorporate installations in my work, and I've always been equally intrigued and intimidated by dance film. Before this process, I would have looked to a collaborator to help me realize these elements, but in this process, I discovered they were areas I could contribute and create. That was a very empowering and exciting by-product."

"The performance truly fulfilled the essence of New Dances: exploration and experimentation."

"New Dances supports the dance community. It unites the community, bringing together artists of different experiences and backgrounds. It is a PAID opportunity, which validates and elevates our craft and gives work to Chicago artists. It provides resources for work to be produced and placed in front of an audience and promotes the choreographers and dancers in the company. Finally, and especially in 2020, it is an event the dance community can look forward to and celebrate. THANK YOU!"
"IT MADE ME THINK ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES THAT VIRTUAL PERFORMANCE PROVIDES WITHOUT BOUNDARIES OF PHYSICAL LOCATION."

"I felt lucky to have experienced working on a virtual platform and to have been part of playing with what does and doesn’t read on a screen. I am also extremely happy to have made new and wonderful connections in the Chicago area."

"This event is unique in this area and the opportunity is wonderful for forming unlikely connections among artists."

"New Dances’ mission has always been fostering new work and new ways of working unique to each artist’s voice. It is this kind of willingness to collaborate and imagine newness that can model ways for us to work together in spaces that move us toward change."

- Jeff Hancock, Mentorship Panel Member

"I was pushed creatively more so because of the virtual experience. I was taken out of my comfort zone and came out of this process inspired."

"Self-discipline has taken on a new meaning."

"You could see and watch as if you had that center seat, 10 rows back. You could feel the dancers moving. You could see their expressions and lots of details. It felt really accessible."

"IN VIEWING THE QUICK AND BREEZY HOUR-LONG EVENT FROM MY SOFA, THESE SIX BITE-SIZED DANCE FILMS DEMONSTRATE THAT DANCE CAN, INDEED, BE COMPELLING DURING COVID."

-LAUREN WARNECKE, SEE CHICAGO DANCE

""I FEEL A TREMENDOUS SENSE OF COMMUNITY EVEN IN THE ISOLATED NATURE OF THIS PROCESS."

"An innovative virtual experience. I loved being part of creative processes that met and exceeded the challenges of our current health climate."

-New Dances 2020 company dancer Kara Roseborough

"As a dancer, I wanted nothing more than to move, perform, collaborate, and come together as a community. It felt so great to have a tangible goal at the end of the process and to create something that reflects this time in history. New Dances helped give me a sense of purpose and support within the Chicago dance community that I have not felt for a while, even prior to the pandemic."

- New Dances 2020 company dancer Alexandra (Ali) Webb

"I am looking forward to pushing the bounds of our field through a virtual platform and creating something entirely new with everyone involved. What an exciting and innovative time!!!! Thank you so much"

-New Dances 2020 company dancer Alexandra (Ali) Webb

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-LAUREN WARNECKE, SEE CHICAGO DANCE"
NEW DANCES 2020

New Dances 2020 at a glance:

- 6 choreographers
- 16 dancers
- 7 artistic/administrative/production staff
- 3 mentors
- 2 full performances
- 6 individual choreographer-led episodes
- 8 Chicago-based community beneficiaries
- 354 audience members
- 20 years of New Dances under the Thodos Dance Chicago umbrella
- 3 years of partnership between Thodos Dance Chicago and DanceWorks Chicago

Sydney Jones  Drew Lewis  Brian Martinez  Joanna Meccia  Joe Musiel  Peyton Winker

Mariterese Altosino  Jacob Buerger  Kim Davis  Ingrid Ferdinand  Abby Hare  Kara Hunsinger

Meredith Johnson  Andi Learman  Christina Morrison  Jacob Nahor  Moscelyne Parke-Harrison

Kara Roseborough  Hanna Swartz  Halina Tutaj  Alexandra Webb  Imani Williams