

British dance troupe Motionhouse brings water-themed piece to SA

By Jasmina Wellinghoff, For the Express-News: April 4, 2014

SAN ANTONIO — How would you like to attend a show that leaves you “gobsmacked, stunned and overawed”?

In the words of one critic, that's how audiences feel after watching “Scattered,” the 70-minute dance-and-film piece created by Motionhouse Dance Theater, a British company known for its innovative, crowd-pleasing productions and massive outdoor spectacles.

The second American tour of “Scattered” will stop at the Carver Community Cultural Center on Wednesday for a single performance presented by Arts San Antonio.

Though relatively short, the work cannot be paired with another number because it's “absolutely intense” and so physically demanding that the dancers need to rest afterward, said Motionhouse Artistic Director **Kevin Finnan**.

“It's a roller-coaster of a performance,” Finnan said. “We did it in Houston last year, and the audience went mad for it. That's why we have been asked back to Texas. It's a visual poem about water. We create this world of water and immerse the audience in it. We integrate dance and spectacle.”

In the show, seven dancers perform on a wavelike set where their daring, athletic movements merge with projected images of waterscapes to create the illusion of them gliding down a waterfall, bodysurfing or diving between ice floes. They also appear to swim underwater and endure the arid environment of a desert.

When he conceived the work in 2009, Finnan said, he had become aware that water was going to be one of the big issues of this century, but he wasn't interested in political polemics.

“I was just fascinated by the different experiences of water,” he said. “We who live in cities with sanitation systems often don't really see the water that surrounds us. So I just wanted to say, 'Look, we are living with this incredible life force and look how wonderful it is.'”

To realize his vision, the choreographer and his dancers worked with like-minded collaborators, such as the Basque filmmakers known as Logela Multimedia, set designer **Simon Dormon** and the music duo **Sophy Smith** and **Tim Dickinson**, who composed the original score.

Finnan and his wife, **Louise Richards**, founded Motionhouse in 1988 and built it into one of the leading companies in the U.K. and Europe. Based in Leamington Spa, near

Birmingham, it was commissioned to produce the huge, \$250,000 outdoor spectacle “The Voyage” as part of that city's contribution to the nationwide arts festival associated with the 2012 Summer Olympics. For his services to dance, Finnan recently received a Member of the **British Empire** medal from **Prince Charles** at Buckingham Palace.

Finnan said he is proud that Motionhouse shows are popular and accessible.

“I believe we live in the age of the spectacle,” he said “and I was interested in how that sensibility can be integrated with performance. Our productions appeal to a wide range of people, including those who have never seen dance before.”

Jasmina Wellinghoff covers dance for the Express-News.

MORE INFORMATION

Motionhouse Dance Theater

When: 7:30 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Carver Community Cultural Center, 226 N. Hackberry

Tickets: \$29-\$110 [artsa.org/ motionhouse](http://artsa.org/motionhouse); \$35.70-\$123.5 at Ticketmaster outlets