
A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a vibrant red dress, is captured in a dynamic backbend pose. Her arms are extended upwards, and her head is tilted back, looking towards the sky. The background is a solid black, which makes the white text and the red dress stand out. The text 'CORE DANCE' is written in large, white, sans-serif capital letters, with the woman's body and limbs weaving through the letters. The 'O's in 'CORE' are particularly large and circular, framing the top of her head and arms. The 'A' in 'DANCE' is a simple outline, and the woman's head and neck pass through it. The 'N' and 'C' in 'DANCE' are also large, with the woman's torso and arms passing through them. The 'E' at the end is a simple outline, with the woman's legs and feet passing through it. The overall composition is balanced and visually striking.

CORE DANCE

CORE DANCE, in its 35th year, is a contemporary dance organization that creates and performs original work, advances the art of making dance, deepens its conversations with audiences, and reaches out to isolated segments of our Atlanta and Houston communities.

BEG INN NOG

"We had to create our own company because no one else was making dance in this way."

SUE SCHROEDER, FOUNDER

Front Cover: Kristin D'Addario in *on love*, 2016. Photo by Lynn Lane.

Left Photo: Juanita Winn Lindley and Kathy Schroeder Russell in *Ashtabula Rag*, 1985.

Right Photo: Sue Schroeder in *and the earth cries inside*, 1993. Photo by Jeff Smith.



In her first year at Houston's High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, a young Sue Schroeder was recruited into the Beverly Cook Dance Company. There she danced for a decade until Ms. Cook disbanded the company.

Schroeder then danced with another company for a year, but soon became restless. Her older sister, Kathy, had also been a member of

Beverly Cook, and both wondered how best to pursue their muse. It wasn't long before they decided to start their own company.

"After nine or ten years of making art in a particular way, from a particular perspective, and with a particular aesthetic, that's what called to us," said Schroeder. "We had to create our own company because that's what interested us, and no one else was making dance in this way."

Christening the new company "Several" to signify the continuation of Cook's art-making process – the last piece the company performed

was called *Several* – the Schroeder sisters, along with two other former Cook dancers, christened their first performance space at a loft studio at 3221 Milam in Houston. The year was 1980.

HALLMARKS

Dual Homes: By 1985, falling oil prices impacted Houston and CORE's landlord did not renew the lease. Its next studio space, DiverseWorks, burned down, and the one after that was an old office, complete with carpet and desks.



Then a college friend – an Atlanta native who had returned to her hometown – called Schroeder and offered her the company's current location in Decatur.

Global Citizens: A defining characteristic of CORE is that it tours.

Touring started as an artifact of collaboration. In the early years, CORE invited Austin-based Yacov Sharir to Houston, and in return, the company performed in Austin. Schroeder soon discovered there were touring rosters available to promote CORE's work. Since then CORE has performed in 16 states.

Soon after adding Atlanta as a second home, CORE was contacted by the Goethe Institute in Munich, Germany. They wanted to present German contemporary dance and asked Schroeder for assistance. The company traveled to Germany in 1988 and has since toured nine other countries.

Professional Artists: CORE has long been a professional dance organization. Dance Artists started receiving salaries in 1986, administrative staff was added in 1990, and full benefits for all were added in 2011.

Dance companies are frequently named after their founding choreographers; e.g. Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, and Alwin Nikolais. They are, after all, vehicles for their founders' visions.

The same can be said of CORE, cofounded by Sue Schroeder and Kathy Schroeder Russell. But the legal name of this company is Several Dancers Core. And in that name is the vision.

"When we formed, the natural order in dance was that choreographers, most of whom were white males, were masters, and dancers were subordinates," said Schroeder, who cofounded CORE at the age of 23. "There was a lot of abuse going on in the dance world, and it was just accepted as the way work was made."

But Schroeder wouldn't have it. "Core" refers to an artistic partnership, and partners have included the company Dance Artists, other choreographers, composers, musicians, visual artists, set designers, lighting designers, et al.; Schroeder believes that art is always made richer through collaboration.

"Success in art making, to me, comes down to truly collaborating, which only

happens when you genuinely value people, give them a voice, and give them a seat at the table," said Schroeder. "When people are valued, they buy in more, they connect more deeply with the work, they contribute more, they invest longer."

Thus, Several Dancers Core. What's in a name? Everything.

A COLLABORATION FRAMEWORK

It's one thing to decry the model of artistic dictator and pronounce yourself a collaborator, but it's something else entirely to develop collaboration into a core competency.

"Can you uphold personal values at work?" asked Schroeder. "It can be challenging, but for me, it's much harder to live my work life differently from my private life."

To strengthen the practice of collaboration, Schroeder developed a framework dubbed "CORE Cultural Practice." Its five components inform both the artistic and business sides of the organization:

- Don Miguel Ruiz's Four Agreements

- Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process
- The Field's Fieldwork Method for Feedback
- Marlene Johnson's Guidelines for Cooperative Living
- The Formal Consensus Process

The practice aims to foster quality work and protect relationships. "We value mutual respect and want to offer feedback and communication that is meaningful," said Schroeder. "We activate these tools every day to support these aspirations."

Although Schroeder had informally applied the framework for years, it wasn't until she reached burnout in 2004 that the practice was formalized.

"It got to the point that I could no longer handle the volume of my workload," said Schroeder, "so out of that moment we developed a shared leadership model. CORE needed to lead in the same manner that art was made in the studio – collaboratively, sharing power, and creating true organizational health."

Photo: Erin Weller Dalton and Kristin D'Addario, CORE Summer Intensive, 2015. Photo by Christian Meyer.

COLLABORATION



I am inspired by Sue's openness. She fosters participation and creative thinking at all levels. What an invigorating joy it is to work with CORE!!!

POLLY MOTLEY, CHOREOGRAPHER

What amazed me about collaborating with Sue was her absolute commitment to the creative process. Her curiosity is infectious, and her dedication to honor the input of all is unswerving.

SUSAN PRINS, CHOREOGRAPHER

35 years. 125 original works. What sets CORE choreography apart? Innovation, a social conscience, and an expertise in creating site-specific and museum work.

INNOVATION

Innovation in dance arises from constantly investigating and experimenting with what's possible with human bodies in motion.

CORE cofounder and artistic director Sue Schroeder and the Dance Artists in the company may spend months investigating how to wordlessly express a single human emotion; Schroeder is always seeking new ways to stimulate movement possibilities beyond one's comfort zone.

"Our work is process-based," explained Schroeder. "We're not creating for an outcome. We're discovering art as it's being made. To innovate is to live; everything else is the opposite."

A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

2015's *Life Interrupted* draws from the experiences of U.S.

citizens of Japanese descent interned on American soil during World War II. It is the latest of many socially-conscious CORE works.

At a time when some political leaders and other prominent voices advocate treating American Muslims in a manner similar to how American Japanese were treated during World War II, *Life Interrupted* could not be more relevant.

"This is what artists do," said Schroeder. "Art activates empathy. We are catalysts for re-envisioning the future."

Why so much attention to social issues? Schroeder points to her mother. "She's 89 years old and drives to nursing homes to volunteer," said Schroeder. "Giving back runs strong in our family culture."

From a home of compassion into a profession where domination and abuse were prevalent, the combination of collaboration, community orientation, and a belief that the arts can heal has brought CORE to a place where creating socially-conscious work isn't a privilege, it's a responsibility.

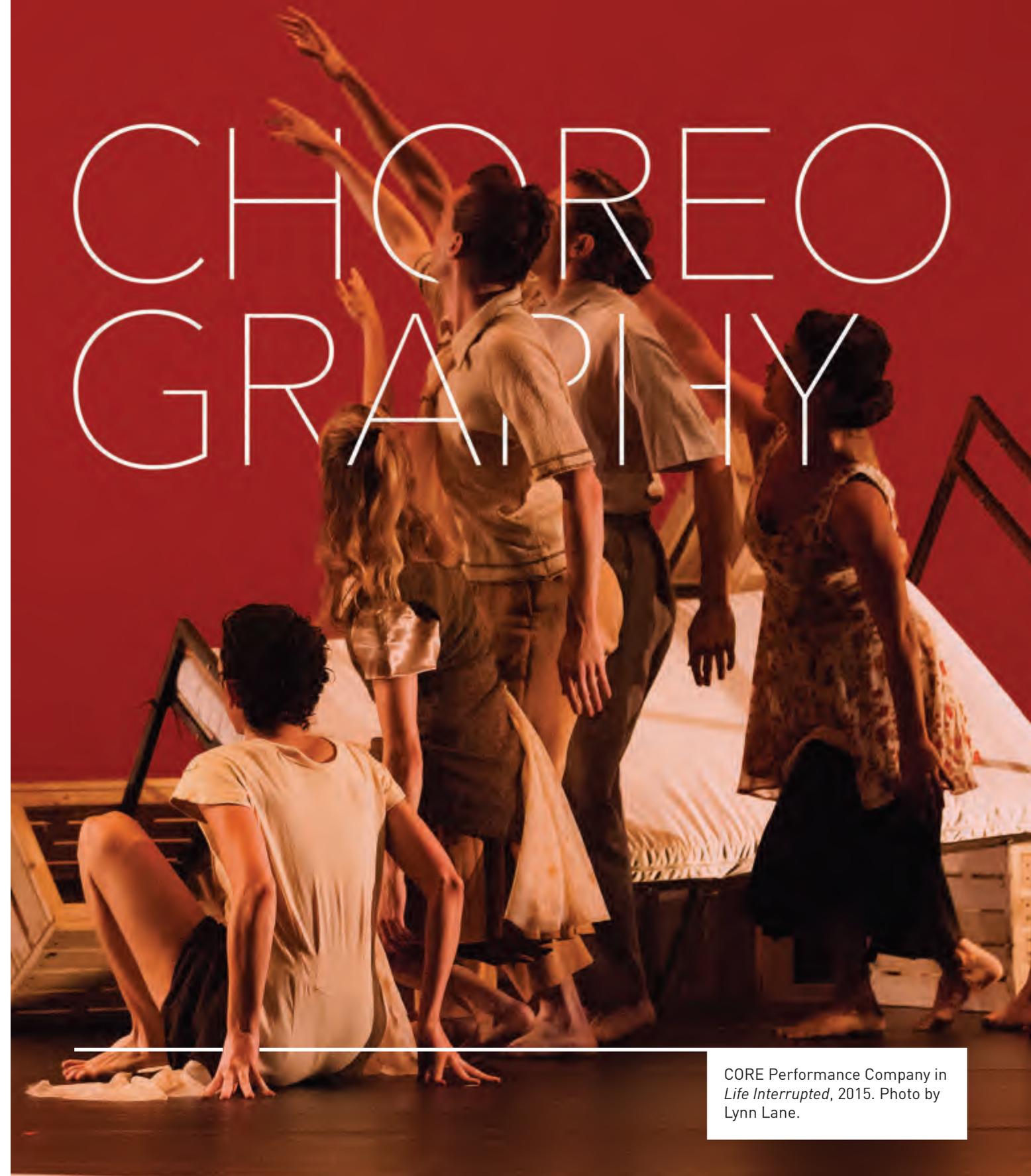
SITE-SPECIFIC AND MUSEUM WORK

CORE did not seek site-specific work, site-specific and museum work found CORE.

Site-specific choreography is inspired and informed by the physical properties and/or the history of the space in which the work is developed and performed, while museum work is created by physicalizing the visual artist's intent. An example of a site-specific work is *Light Moves*, which was created for the Architects of Air's monumental inflatable structure installed at the University of Central Arkansas. And an example of museum work is *Monochrome in Black, White and Gray* for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's exhibit *Picasso Black and White*.

CORE's drive to innovate and engage is satisfied by site-specific work. CORE collaborates with site representatives to bring alive their visions. Moreover, "we are interested in connecting our art-making to our audiences," said Schroeder.

CHOREO GRAPHY



CORE Performance Company in *Life Interrupted*, 2015. Photo by Lynn Lane.

CULTIVATION



Nadya Zeitlin, from the Fieldwork program, 2014. Photo by Nadya Zeitlin.

In the early years, Sue Schroeder found it difficult to garner support from the Houston art establishment; the elders were unwilling to share the wisdom and knowledge that could help her.

“It was a time when the scarcity mentality ran strong,” said Schroeder. “They saw only one pie and a limited number of pieces. I decided I would go the other direction and pay it forward.”

For Schroeder, it’s a spiritual practice to “unteach the starving artist mentality to most of the artists that have come through CORE. We’re artists. We create. It’s our passion and our careers. The uniqueness of our creative contributions should be celebrated. In this way, we become catalysts for more – more art-making, more support, larger audiences, increased recognition. In this way we promote dance and art as valid professions.”

Today, CORE offers three programs that advance the making of art: Fieldwork, the Teacher Training Institute (TTI), and Summer Intensive. While Fieldwork and the Teacher Training Institute welcome all

artistic disciplines, Summer Intensive is focused on dance professionals.

These programs – along with CORE’s practice of producing non-CORE dance performances – help make CORE’s dual homes of Atlanta and Houston viable centers for dance.

“Dance thrives in communities where opportunities for creative and professional development are part of the landscape,” said Schroeder. “We envision CORE as a catalyst for the continued evolution of Atlanta and Houston as dynamic centers for dance, with the knowledge that dance as art-making is a vital element of the fabric of human experience.”

FIELDWORK

Fieldwork is a unique facilitated forum for artists to share developing works and exchange feedback over the course of 10 weeks.

A safe and rigorous space for creative exploration, Fieldwork provides objective, artist-to-artist, non-directorial feedback through a ‘test audience’ structure. Each session culminates in a performance with an audience.

Developed by The Field of New York City, Fieldwork has been offered in Atlanta and Houston twice a year for the last 24 years.

TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTE

Setting the standard for excellence, the Teacher Training Institute (TTI) develops the most qualified instructors in the region to teach art, dance, and kinetic learning in community enrichment programs. TTI, offered since 2001, imparts learning techniques that develop skills in children and adults who are challenged by traditional cognitive learning models. And TTI offers insight into how to teach within community-based settings, a unique approach and methodology not often found in the education and arts education programs at the college level.

SUMMER INTENSIVE

CORE’s Summer Intensive is a week-long program that brings in noted guest artists to inspire and invigorate dance professionals.



From CREATE DANCE!, a children's summer program, 2013. Photo by John Ramspott.

All of these CORE activities – conscious collaboration, innovative and site-specific choreography, and cultivation of the art of making art – share two characteristics: they are deeply engaging and they involve dancers and other artists.

But CORE's impulse to engage deeply extends beyond fellow dancers and art makers to audience members and members of the community at large.

CORE initiates conversations with its audience via Lunchtime in the Studio, Salon, and Artist Conversations. Interactive in nature, these events invite participants to share their thoughts, interpretations, and viewpoints while providing glimpses into the

language of dance and the creative process. These opportunities for audience engagement have been fixtures among CORE's activities since 2002.

CORE's cofounder and artistic director, Sue Schroeder, explained the why behind the programs: "There's a difference between actively and passively watching work. To awaken the human spirit even for just a moment, to be fully present, to feel real emotions, to relate to a real human being... I think these things are important."

Dynamic X-Change (DXC), CORE's signature community outreach program since 1992, has worked with people of all ages who are isolated because

of their circumstances: dealing with abuse, homelessness, language barriers, refugee status, substance abuse, aging, and HIV/AIDS. DXC provides safe, constructive, nurturing, and creative outlets for people in need of building self-awareness, communication skills, healthy body awareness, and movement appreciation. Focusing on expression and communication, as well as physical activity and fitness, participants discuss and interpret experiences through movement.

1980



1980: CORE is founded in Houston by Kathy and Sue Schroeder

1982: DiverseWorks residency, Houston

1985: Atlanta becomes CORE's second home

1986: Dance Artists start receiving salaries



1987: First performance at Miller Outdoor Theater, Houston

1988: First international tour, Germany

1988: CORE joins Alternate ROOTS

1989: First year as National Performance Network (NPN) presenter

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1990: CORE adds paid administrative staff



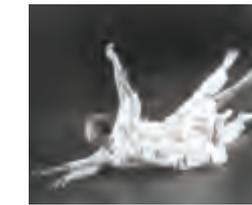
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1995: Choreography: *Aria for Endangered Species*



1997: First performance at Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

2000

LET US
HEAR
FROM
YOU!



From CREATE DANCE!, a children's summer program, 2013. Photo by John Ramspott.

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1997: First performance at Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

2000 2010

2000: Choreography: *Messiah*, most performed CORE piece

2002: First performance at Bayou City Art Festival, Houston

2004: Formally adopted five cultural practices



2006: Choreography: *Corazón Abriendo*

2009: First performance at University of Central Arkansas, Conway

2011: Moving Towards Health residency, Conway, AR



2012: First performance at The High Museum of Art, Atlanta

2013: First performance at Menil Collection, Houston



2013: First performance at Flux Projects, Atlanta

2015: Choreography: *Life Interrupted*

2016: CORE's 35th Anniversary

Our work, an ever-flowing stream of conscious and conscientious collaboration in the service of art making in general and contemporary dance in particular, is made possible through the generous support of individuals and institutions big and small.

To share time, talent, and/or funds, or for more information about CORE, please contact us at info@coredance.org. To make a donation immediately, visit

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Andrew Rittfeld and Kristin
D'Addario in *on love*, 2016.
Photo by Lynn Lane.



CORE DANCE

www.coredance.org