



A Question of Beauty: Collaborative artistic effort explores Muskegon windmill project

AADW_RobinWilson.jpg

Ann Arbor Dance Works member Robin Wilson, shown in an outdoor industrial setting, will be a dancer in the "Into the Wind" program. *(Jeff Dykehouse)*

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Industry is often a negative term – as in, say, the coal-fired power industry. But industry, in an artistic sense, can also be defined as the collaborative effort to create a thing of beauty and intellectual stimulation.

The two definitions, the two seemingly incompatible ideas, collide in a modern dance theater production, "Into the Wind," coming to Muskegon's Michigan Alternative and Renewable Energy Center (MAREC) **August 22-23**.

MAREC, located on the shores of Muskegon Lake, is the site of the former Continental Motors factory and overlooks a power plant scheduled for decommissioning in 2016.

The interdisciplinary performance will tell the story of Muskegon's transformation from a bustling manufacturing community to one that seeking to regain economic prosperity by various means including exploring alternative energy, specifically wind turbines.

"Wind is a wonderful topic for dance, and I've been interested in celebrating the elemental force of wind and its vast range of qualities," said University of Michigan dance professor Jessica Fogel, who is choreographer and artistic director of "Into the Wind."

"From a social/educational standpoint, I've been struck by the emotional dialogues wind energy has stirred up in the communities hosting these developments," Fogel said. "I see this performance as a potential catalyst for dialogues, offering a different way of entering into the topic than your typical town hall meeting or lecture about renewable energy."

Fogel and her UM dance group, Ann Arbor Dance Works, working with composer Dave Biedenbender, are just one facet of the wide-ranging artistic effort that is coming together with "Into the Wind".

Other forces at UM, Grand Valley State University and the Muskegon Museum of Art are all collaborating on a program that will feature dance, music and poetry created to be performed by students, alumni and faculty from both universities.

The program will include a piece choreographed by GVSU dance professor and U-M alumnus Shawn Bible and performed by his students. GVSU music professor Nate Bliton has composed music for the piece, which will incorporate sounds of wind turbines.

"The idea of renewable energy is a relevant theme in the global world with strong points of view on both sides," Bible said. "I am interested in the space between those views, the people who are interested in implementing wind energy into their lives but do not want the imposition of the machines. My dance will focus on the machines themselves, the wind turbine blades, and the sounds produced."

Bliton will have two roles in the project, technical/audio director and the music composer for Bible's dancers.

"In my music, I am using audio recordings of a wind farm similar to the proposed one for this project," Bliton said, "... a mix of literal sounds of the windmills and other sounds and instruments to fill out the piece."

In a related effort, for the month of August, the Muskegon Museum of Art will display artwork by UM professor Sara Alderstein-Gonzalez and information about the "Into the Wind" project. Alderstein's scientific research work on the environmental impact of wind turbines, as well as her paintings, inspired Fogel's creation of "Into the Wind."

"From the models I have been doing, the impact is next to nothing," Adlerstein said. "People opposed to them are doing so because they are ugly — not because they aren't good for the environment," Alderson said in supplied material. "I wanted to explore the question of beauty."

Fogel and the "Into the Wind" project will, likely, allow viewers to creatively confront that question: can industry hold beauty?

*"Into the Wind" will be performed Friday and Saturday, August 22-23, at 7 p.m., at MAREC. Performances are free to the public. Reservations are recommended and can be made by calling 231-722-4371 or MAREC at 616-331-6900. For more information visit **annarbordanceworks.com** .*

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