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Conduit Turns 10

By Justin Westcoat Sanders

Some day, in the not-so-distant future, when Portland has finally reached its potential as a major center for dance culture, people will look back on Conduit as its founding father. Started in 1995 by Mary Oslund and Linda K. Johnson, the spacious, beautifully lit downtown studio quickly became the space for dance practitioners to hone their craft. With a consistently excellent lineup of classes and workshops, and an endless potential for performance permutations of movement, live music, lighting, and multimedia, Conduit raised the bar for what Portland dance could be. This weekend wraps up an eight-day celebration of the studio's 10th anniversary, an incredible feat for any local arts organization, let alone one centered on dance.

I first encountered Conduit while a freshman in college, on a rare adventure into the "big city" from my campus bubble in the Portland suburbs. Walking up the creaky stairs to its

home on the fourth floor of the Pythian Building, I was struck by the urban charm of the place—old-fashioned banisters, loft windows, and hardwood floors lent it an old-school aura, like some New York City institution, weathered and strong from decades of tradition. I don't remember what I saw that night (I was probably stoned or something), but I vividly remember that first brush with its warm, welcoming ambience. I've returned many times since that initial visit and have witnessed (and remembered) everything from Christine Calfas' eerie puppet-driven *Sounding Hekate* to Oslund's furiously calculated *Fifty Infants* to Gregg Bielemeier's surreal, hilarious *Poodle Farm*. The magic of Conduit is infectious, and all who perform there seem to rise to a whole new level, which is reason enough to celebrate this weekend. Any old dance space can entertain and provoke and teach for 10 years. Conduit inspires.