

The Oregonian

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Dance Introduction

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Is a new age dawning for Portland dance? A lot of signs point to "yes."

Let's pause for a moment to reflect on the Dark Years, after Portland State University gave the ax, in short succession, to its Contemporary Dance Series, dance department and the unparalleled Portland International Performance Festival, casting choreographers, aspiring dancers and a hungry audience adrift.

Rising from the ashes were Conduit, a critical training and performance venue for modern dancers, and Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, which lured artists of national and international renown to the city, sated appetites hungry for avant-garde, off-the-radar dance arts and sparked a sea change with its Time-Based Art Festival. TBA was a gamble; it's now a major calling card for the city as an experimental arts mecca.

Then it was White Bird on the scene, resurrecting Portland as a destination for touring companies. White Bird's been playing a savvy marketing hand for years, straddling the divide between family-friendly (this season, Momix and Savion Glover) and provocative (on the roster, Batsheva Dance Company and Tania Perez-Salas Compania de Danza). Meanwhile, Christopher Stowell continues to reinvent Oregon Ballet Theatre as a company synonymous with the work of the 20th-century master George Balanchine.

Portland Art Center cut the ribbon on massive new digs this year, providing local choreographers a much-needed venue and the opportunity for cross-discipline collaboration with artists working in alternative media.

Foundations are investing in the local dance community: **Conduit, whose future has been tenuous for years, just announced a major capital grant for a technical facility upgrade.**

New dance companies are sprouting as fast as new transplants land in Portland. Local choreographers are going national and international: Jayanthi Raman and Minh Tran are both touring this fall, while Tahni Holt and Linda Austin headed to Scotland last season to immerse themselves in the work of the legendary Deborah Hay. And international choreographers have made Portland their perennial stomping grounds; butoh legend Akira Kasai returns next summer to teach a new generation of students.

Meanwhile, the discourse heats up. PICA's TBA: 06 includes panel discussions on everything from "Creative Cities" to "Art and Activism" to the "New Burlesque." White Bird and OBT hosted Dance USA's 2006 National Roundtable this summer, where conference talk swirled around dance as "product."

Heady times. Dance cards are overflowing, and the season's just begun.

conduit
dance, inc

Other Shows & Best Bets : events at Conduit

Sept. 16-17 "Nowhere Bound": Contact Improvisation intensive weekend of interactive performance with Martin Keogh. CI dance is unique in that no real distinction is made between workshop and performance; it requires a willingness among all participants to explore the performance space (and each other) with an absence of will or directive. 1-8 p.m., Sept. 16-17, Conduit Dance Studio, 918 S.W. Yamhill St., fourth floor, Sliding scale, 221-5857.

Oct. 15 "3WayCall" Choreographer Katrina O'Brien is a relative newcomer to the Portland dance scene, but her three-woman show (with New Yorker Stephanie Beauchamp and Nancy Hughes from Massachusetts) promises equal parts classicism, mayhem and sarcasm in a multilayered comment on modern technology. 6 p.m., Conduit Dance, 918 S.W. Yamhill, Suite 401; \$10-\$14, 503-221-5857, ext. 3.

Oct. 28 Conduit benefit performances: The "Lights On" thank-you party celebrates an upgrade of technical facilities with free performances open to the public, 7 p.m. Sat, Oct. 28.

Nov. 10-12 Luciana Proano's "Mi Siento con Vallejo" Proano's work is infrequently seen, but she's the rare artist whose dance can linger in memory for years. Her latest solo work plumbs the language of radical Peruvian poet Cesar Vallejo; Proano's voice -- in Spanish, English and with distorted effects -- serves as surrealist duet. 8 p.m. Nov. 10-12, Conduit Dance, 918 S.W. Yamhill, Suite 401; \$10-\$15, 503-977-0620.

Dec. 3 And the "Conduit Annual Benefit" performance seeks to raise money for the company. 7 p.m. Sun, Dec. 3, 918 S.W. Yamhill St., Suite 401; various prices; details: 221-5857.

