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Pair form a Conduit for dance

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Making dances is a tough business – tougher in Portland than in many other cities.

Institutional support for dance in Portland continues to contract. First Portland State University axed its dance department, then the university's Contemporary Dance Season suspended operations. Studios go on folding or canceling classes.

Even the city's dance giant, Oregon Ballet Theatre, suffered a significant setback recently when the company's New York debut, a collaboration with choreographer Carole Armitage, failed to materialize after funding evaporated.

It's become fashionable to claim that dance in Portland is dying, if not already dead. But fashion has little to do with fact.

A significant number of established dancer-choreographer and small companies continue to teach, to rehearse and to present artful, intelligent and provocative work in Portland. They Besides artistic directors Johnson and Oslund, the list includes Gregg Bielemeier, Keith V. Goodman and Michael Menger/The Really Big Dance Company, Erin Boberg, Nancy Goodrich, Bonnie Merrill, Katherine Petersen and Carolyn Stuart.

Conduit's regular performance season begins with Petersen's concerts Nov. 3, 4, 10 and 11; Johnson, Bielemeier, Goodman and Menger present individual concerts beginning in February.

work with little or no institutional support, performing in galleries and nightclubs as well as theaters. Their audience is small, but vocal and enthusiastic.

Emerging choreographers find performance opportunities in the Dance Cartel's two annual showcases. Undergraduates study dance at both Reed College and Lewis & Clark College. Dance in Portland is certainly not dead.

Thanks to Oregon ballet Theatre, classical ballet has a physical presence in downtown. Now, with the opening of Conduit at 918 SW Yamhill St., contemporary dance does, too.

Two noted local dancer-choreographers, Linda K. Johnson and Mary Oslund, have joined forces to open a 3,000-square-foot studio, rehearsal and performance space in the Pythian Building.

A list of Conduit's directors, core artists and participating artists reads like a Who's Who of Portland contemporary dance.

In December, Seattle choreographer Stephanie Skura will rehearse and offer workshops at Conduit during her Portland Center for Contemporary Art engagement. New Yorkers Elizabeth Streb and Donna Uchizonono will do the same in April and May.

Conduit's daily classes begin Sept. 5. For information call 1221-5857.