

A humanitarian dance

Wallflower Order moves for a change

Generating great receptions, packed houses and rave reviews from the Village Voice to the Kansas City Times, the nationally-acclaimed dance troupe the Wallflower Order has been touring together for five years throughout the country.

But Eugene is home.

And, the Wallflower Order is coming home for a few days: Tonight, Friday and Sunday the Order will be joining the Latin American musical group, Grupo Raiz, to perform a benefit tour for humanitarian aid to El Salvador and Chile at the Community Center for the Performing Arts (Eighth Avenue and Lincoln Street).

The Order embarks on two to three major tours a year and performs at numerous local benefits in Eugene. Recently the group has danced benefits for White Bird and the Nestle's boycott in Eugene.

The Wallflower Order is a women's collective dance troupe which caters to predominantly women's audiences. Strongly linked to various women's groups in the community, the dances it performs relate to the character of each member's experiences as a woman.

Members include Krissy Keefer, Lynn Neely, Pamela Gray, Nina Fichter, and Suchi Branfman, and as a women's collective dance group, the Wallflower Order uses no director. Rather, each member puts an equal amount of energy into the composition and execution of the dances. Continuing this individualistic mode, the members are also all involved in various political study groups in Eugene.

While the dance of the Wallflower Order reflects a study in politics — particularly class differences, anti-imperialist, solidarity and liberation struggles, the group has become increasingly connected with politics and problems of other groups not specifically tied to the Women's Movement.

"Art is political work," producer of the WOW Hall performance Coleen Gragen says.

"The group is committed to people developing their talents who would not necessarily be recognized by the traditional dance scene," she adds.

Wanting to disassociate themselves from the "traditional dance scene," the group members met at the university dance department and formed the

Eugene Dance Collective; the Wallflower Order followed.

The collective and Grupo Raiz come to the CCPA after sell-out performances in Santa Cruz and the Bay Area. They will continue the benefit tour up through Corvallis, Portland, Olympia and Seattle.

Along with Grupo Raiz, the Order performed three dances on the downtown mall at the April 18th demonstration against United States intervention in El Salvador. Along with the dance, both groups encouraged the crowd to

Gragen says that as other groups in the country are doing, the Wallflower Order is becoming increasingly connected to the problems of other people, which are larger than one specific group.

Incorporated in the tour is a dance to a Holly Near song entitled "Au Una Mujer," which portrays women political prisoners in Chile. Also performed in the benefit tour is a dance which stems from the book "Torture and Resistance," written by Ashraf Deghani, a woman guerrilla fighter in Iran.



sing along with them "Nicaragua is Free, El Salvador soon to be."

Krissy Keefer, a dancer with the collective, feels the April 18th demonstration was a well organized, exciting and wonderful experience.

"We are involved in this because it is part of what is happening in a big way in the world. We want to raise the people's conscious to the point that they will get involved, write their congressmen, do something — guns, 'economic aid' and other intervention has to stop in Latin America," Keefer says.

The troupe has dealt with the nuke and anti-draft movements, Iranian-American Friendship Committee, Solidarity with the Black Movement, and freedom for the peoples of Latin America in its dance.

Another dance, entitled "Z Ballet for Z People," depicts a waitress in a restaurant involved in the class struggles of the aristocratic and lower classes; while still another composition employs colorful costumes and depicts the plight of the near-extinct flamingos in Chile.

Grupo Raiz is part of the Latin American Song Movement that draws on the traditional music of the Andes, the Nueva Cancion from Chile, Caribbean percussion and touches of North American jazz. The Wallflower Order met Grupo Raiz at the People's Inauguration Demonstration benefit for El Salvador held in Eugene last January. This tour is the first time the Wallflower Order has worked with

another group.

"Both groups are united in this benefit tour because they are strongly committed to the victory of the El Salvadorian people and are willing to spend two months of time and energy to benefit the cause," Gragen said.

The funds generated from the tour will be used partly for humanitarian aid to El Salvador, and partly for the purchase of traditional cultural musical instruments in Chile. (The Chilean government forbids these traditional musical instruments because, historically, Chilean people have used music as a political art to organize).

Gragen says that she cannot stress enough the importance of the political cause attached to this tour. "The Latin American peoples should possess the right of freedom unhampered by inhuman intervention from foreign powers," she says. "El Salvador will win."

Keefer says the Wallflower Order is committed to supporting progressive political groups anywhere, particularly victims of U.S. intervention.

"We want to keep a momentum going in this country to stop initiating war," she says. "We will keep working and working until the situation clears, and intervention ceases."

The performances, which will run two to three hours each night, promise to be an excellent union of North American and Latin American culture.

The five musicians in Grupo Raiz all play a wide variety of traditional Latin American instruments including charangos, zamponas, congas, and five varieties of indigenous flutes. And the Wallflower Order performs with a wholistic blend of various dance forms including ballet, modern, and jazz with gymnastics, martial arts, sign language, theater, singing, and comedy.

Tickets are available at Zoo Zoo's Restaurant, The Book and Tea, and Better Days Clothing Store. Curtain time is 8 p.m. Childcare is available, and the CCPA is wheelchair accessible. Tickets will be available at the door at 6:30 p.m. on the day of the shows. For more information call 484-7456 or 343-9130.

Story by Sheri Scully
Photos provided by
the Wallflower Order

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