

painting nightmares in his postmodern dances."

The upcoming program, on the other hand, Petronio describes as "filled with light, more hopeful."

Most of the evening is dedicated to two dances set to the music of queer Canadian musician Rufus Wainwright, whom Petronio says "has the voice of an angel and the wit of a devil."

"Bud Suite" is set to four previously released Wainwright songs: "Oh What a World," "Vibrate," "This Love Affair" and "Agnus Dei."

For the dance "Bloom," Petronio commissioned music from Wainwright. Petronio says the work started with a concept: "the transition from one innocent stage to another, becoming what you're going to become."

For lyrics, Wainwright and Petronio decided to use poetry by Emily Dickinson ("Hope Is the Thing with Feathers") and Walt Whitman ("Unseen Buds" and "One's-Self I Sing") as well as Lux Aeterna ("Eternal Light"), which is part of the Latin Mass. Once that was settled, Petronio says Wainwright swiftly composed the music: "He's that kind of guy."

Petronio has long been known for his collaborations with artists such as Lou Reed, Laurie Anderson and Diamanda Galás. In April he will premiere two new works: "Beauty and the Brut," a collaboration with New York City electro-pop group Fischer-Spooner, and "Girl in a World," set to the music of hotshot young gay composer Nico Muhly.

As for "Bloom," Petronio says, "Rufus has done an incredible job...completely inspiring."

For Petronio, one of the most exciting characteristics of "Bloom" is the fact that, in many places where it is performed, the music incorporates the live voices of a local youth choir.

The young singers are accompanied by a pre-recorded score, made up of Wainwright singing all the parts, like a "chorus of 24 Rufuses singing," explains Petronio. As long as the choir sings at the pace of the recording, there is negligible variation for the dancers to adjust to.

"The timing has very little variable," says Petronio. "It's just the range and warmth that the group brings that varies."

In the case of the Portland performance, by being part of "Bloom," members of the Pacific Youth Choir might get to rehearse with Petronio, in person. "First we meet and talk about the piece, then I listen and offer suggestions, and we usually sing it together," he says.



SARAH SILVER

Stephen Petronio says Portland has a "rockin' dance audience" for a city of its size.

Petronio continues: "It allows interaction between my company and local choirs on a much different level. You get to know more about the people you're performing for."

Because of this local participation, Petronio finds that performances become "much more of a community experience."

It might be the first time that some youth choir members have seen contemporary dance. Similarly, the singers' friends and relatives tend to make their way into the audience, even if they wouldn't usually attend a concert dance performance.

"It's about making everyone more familiar with things they don't know about," says Petronio.

When Petronio says "everyone," he's including himself. Petronio told *The Boston Globe* that he originally decided to involve young people in "Bloom" because "I had begun to feel that I was in a little too comfortable and predictable niche."

The third and final dance on the program is Petronio's take on Stravinsky's ballet score "The Rite of Spring," which was—for a number of reasons—considered scandalous in 1913, when Les Ballets Russes staged it in Paris.

Because "The Rite of Spring" is such a modern art landmark, Petronio says nearly "every choreographer has to try it at one point." He created his version, called "The Rite Part," to "have a look at the sexual politics" of a certain section of "The Rite of Spring," which involves the ritual sacrifice of a young virgin.

In "The Rite Part," Petronio says he tried to "sexualize and sensualize" the movements of the female dancers. When the characters come across as powerful, determined and angry, that final sacrifice is in fact "no sacrifice, and she's no virgin," he adds. 10

White Bird presents STEPHEN PETRONIO COMPANY 7:30 p.m. March 5 at Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, 1037 S.W. Broadway. Tickets are \$20-\$50 from 503-790-2787.

Petronio teams up with White Bird co-founder Paul King and Nostrana head chef Cathy Whims for a COOKING WITH THE CHOREOGRAPHERS fund-raiser March 2. Details and reservations are available at www.whitebird.org.

REBECCA RAGAIN writes regularly for Just Out and has contributed to Dance Magazine. Contact her via www.rebeccaragain.com.

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