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Dance BY RACHAEL CARNES

Movement Never Lies

The continuing rise and fall of Eugene dance.

As a town for dance, Eugene has terrific potential.

I like Co-Art: Their show last year was irreverent and ballsy. Local star Alito Alessi recently received a Guggenheim for his dance-ability method. The Eugene Ballet Company churns out a consistent product that's as varied as their idiom can be.

We have a great concert hall, though I prefer to watch dance in more intimate surroundings. But the Hult has introduced some thought-provoking performances recently, most notably Pat Graney's "The Vivian Girls."

And Eugene boasts two college dance departments that bring in fine touring companies and choreographers, while providing solid footing for any young dancer who wants to check out the terpsichorean art. A few of their graduates are even rooting themselves here, a noble effort to be sure, since this wild and wooly frontier doesn't offer much support to the up-and-coming.

But there is also a systemic problem: well-seated complacency and the passive acceptance of mediocrity. Some of the work I've seen in Eugene — haughty, predictable fare — seems to lack any national or international awareness. These flaccid "new" works are extraordinary only in their disregard for craftsmanship.

I am resolved in my charge to keep bringing dance to the table, and I hope audiences will continue to make inquiries, too. Not just to spend their money and time on a little culture, but to notice what they like, and what they don't: To push dance forward. At its best, dance is a breathtaking art form. At its worst, I would rather be having oral surgery.

Here are three upcoming opportunities to see what you think of the local and regional dance scene:

The first is **En Masse Ensemble**, a new artistic collective given reign to be, says Project Director Sarah Nemecek, "open to possibility." In this process of group discovery, according to Nemecek, each artist pushes his/her own creativity. As the resulting site-specific work un-



folds, movement and musical moments transform the staged environment; in this case the many DIVA galleries. En Masse should be encouraged for their bold experimentation and clever utilization of space. Check out their collaborative experience, *Domain*, at 7:30 and 9 pm Oct. 21 and 22 at DIVA, 110 W. Broadway. Tickets are \$5 per person at the door.

And next week, don't miss **A-Laska Dance**: From Portland, a triumphant blend of fierce choreography and live music by East West Continuo. See highlighted article in Fall 2005 *Bravo* issue online. At 7 and 8:30 pm at the WOW Hall, 8th and Lincoln, Oct. 26. General admission is \$10 at the door.

And later, if you're in the mood to sample local works culled from the Eugene community, then head over the hill for the LCC Fall Collage. This potpourri features Rita Honka's reprising her gem of a duet "Familiars," this time with Amy Stoddard and Kim Vetter. Mutual-muses Bonnie Simoa and Walter Kennedy offer surprises. And look for new student works by Mandy Barba, Aaron Barnhart and the tireless Zapp Dancers at 8 pm Friday and Saturday, Oct. 28 and 29, at LCC's Performance Hall. \$10 adults; \$8 students/seniors. **EW**



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