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Dance BY RACHAEL CARNES

Momix astonishes
 Portland Oct. 25.

DON PURDUE

Portland's White Bird Dance Takes Flight

and provides a model for Eugene.

Ask someone in Eugene about White Bird, and they'll probably direct you to the treatment center on East 12th. In Portland, White Bird is of a different feather: an innovative dance series that's broadening audiences and building community.

The nonprofit company was the brainchild of two arts impresarios, Walter Jaffe and Paul King, and since its founding in 1997 has featured 75 dance companies, 140 performances and reached over 150,000 audience members. In King and Jaffe's vision, Portland could and would be a home not just for local and regional dance, but a stage for the development of worldwide contemporary performance.

The 2006-2007 White Bird dance series plays on a successful theme: pack the Schnitz with some bigger names, like **Momix** (Oct. 25), **Dayton Dance** (Apr. 25, 2007), and perennial crowd-pleasers like **Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo** (Feb. 14, 2007), or The "Trocks," as these fellows in size 14 pointe shoes are lovingly called.

But White Bird steps beyond more mainstream dance to bring the vanguard right to us. With performances in PSU's Lincoln Hall, the 2006-2007 series focuses on a celebration of international women choreographers: Mexico's **Tania Pérez-Salas** (Oct. 12-14), The Ivory Coast's **Compagnie Tché Tché** (Dec. 7-9), New York's **Gina Gibney Dance** (Jan. 11-13, 2007) and from the Netherlands, **Conny Janssen Danst** (Mar. 22-24, 2007).

"Most of the companies we program are making their debuts, sometimes even their North American debuts," Jaffe said, referring to the 476-seat Lincoln Performance Hall series. "The series is being identified as one offering often challenging, sometimes

provocative work that incites difference of opinions. It has become extremely international — in the last three years, including the upcoming one, each of the four companies has been from a different country."

White Bird's ongoing educational outreach programs weave dance into Portland tapestry. "We have brought dance to community centers, schools and facilities, to those who are economically or physically unable to attend in traditional venues," King said.

He said one of the most rewarding pairings has been with a Portland home for emotionally disturbed and behaviorally delinquent boys. "All of these activities are essential for building the future audience for dance and for bringing the arts into the lives of young people," King said.

And to counter wasted seats for a live performance, White Bird offers NEST, "No Empty Seat Tonight," which allows patrons with series tickets to donate unused seats to a school or charitable organization.

Dance needs support: not just ticket sales, but education and accessibility. If new local and regional works are to be inspired, choreographers need to see current work by their global peers. Performers and audiences need a forum for experimentation and an outlet for critical thinking.

Audiences, Jaffe and King note, can relate to dance's athleticism. "We strongly believe that anyone can enjoy dance," King said.

With indomitable programming vision and an affable respect for new audiences, White Bird Dance offers a model for our growing community.

For more information and tickets, log on to www.whitebird.org

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