

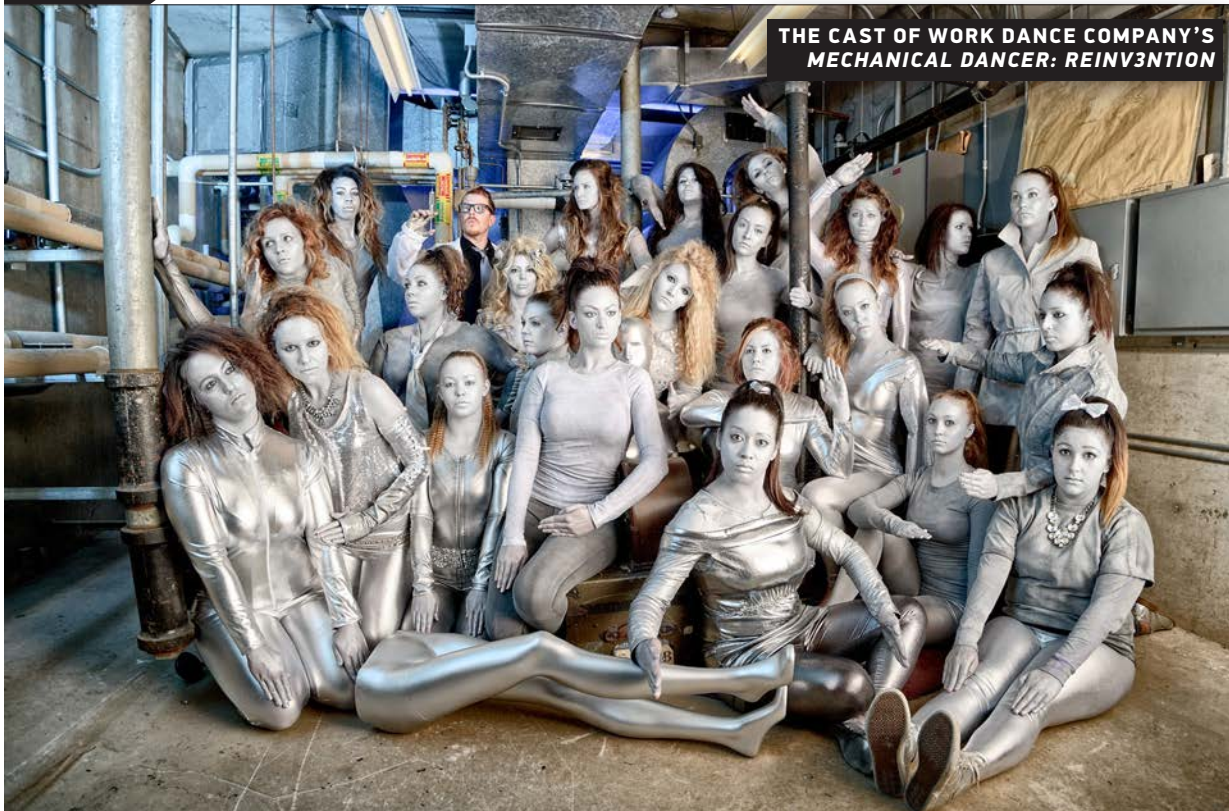


PHOTO BY MICHAEL BRINKERHOFF

THE AGE OF REINVENTION

Ditch the daily drudgery and catch Work Dance Company's Mechanical Dancer at the Hult

In the Information Age, it can be difficult to assess where routine ends and passion begins. The monotony of the daily grind can make you downright maniacal. Luckily, Work Dance Company director and choreographer Nate Boozer is here to give you a reboot.

Boozer and more than 100 dancers, that is. Work Dance Company's presents *Mechanical Dancer: REINV3NTION* Feb. 21 at the Hult Center.

"The whole point of the show is about breaking out of that mechanical mold," Boozer says. "In everyday life, we

get so into our routine and it almost becomes mechanical, to the point where you know where you're going to be every second of the day."

Boozer explains that the show "really takes you on a journey" as the dancers start to emit more color, guiding the audience through dark, sexy and happy places — helping people break free of routine and find their passions and individuality.

Mechanical Dancer features several local dance companies — including Kings Krew, Xcape, Dance Factory, UO Jam Squad and Dance Northwest — and styles, such as modern, jazz, hip hop, contemporary, funk and African. Boozer and producer Ryan Kee created a music mix ranging from Sam Smith to "Haus of Gaga," a nine-minute powerhouse of a Lady Gaga megamix.

Gaga inspired Boozer to start the company eight years ago. Since then, he has produced seven sold-out performances at the Hult Center and hopes *A Mechanical Dancer: REINV3NTION* will be his eighth.

"Lady Gaga is a huge inspiration for me and she always has been," says Boozer, who met the singer last summer. "She just put a fire under my butt to step it up and I'm really excited to do that."

Gaga would approve of Boozer's shows, which he calls "a party." The visually dazzling performances are chockfull of special effects, costume changes, video projection screens and high-tech props.

"I want people to not just watch a dance. I want them to feel like they're part of it. I want them to be on the edge of their seat the whole time," he says. "I'm into getting hands-on with making these shows come to life. That's what my biggest passion is. It's taking something that is so simple and making it so grand." ■

Work Dance Company presents Mechanical Dancer: REINV3NTION 7:30 pm Saturday, Feb. 21, at the Hult Center; \$21. Proceeds benefit Greenhill Humane Society.

CLASS ACT

Veteran director Judy Wenger is back with Snow White at Rose Children's Theatre

Veteran teacher, director, author and the inspiration for Ms. Wingit of the nationally syndicated cartoon *Stone Soup*, Judy Wenger is a Eugene icon. And she's directing again, with a gleeful adaptation of *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs* for Rose Children's Theatre.

During her 37 years in education, Wenger developed a theory of theater education that rests heavily on community and respect, at the expense of stardom.

"Everyone should be required to be in a play," Wenger says. "The experience allows kids to gain confidence, appreciate language and experience how a story is put together. It's about being a team player, not about who is the star."

This ethic is evident in her upcoming production of *Snow White*. Every child has a line and is on stage for at least two scenes. Everyone, from the Wicked Witch to the talking trees, was called to special rehearsals to work on character. The lead role of Snow White is double-cast, and the stars take turns playing a woodland creature on their respective nights out of the spotlight.

Wenger says she's enjoyed this particular experience, and with more than 100 shows under her belt, that's saying something. "About a third of the cast is performing in their first play," she notes of the actors, who range in age from 8 to 15. "The older ones have been great mentors for the younger ones."

Finding a script that allows for lines and multiple entrances for 35 young actors required that Wenger get creative. "After reading at least six versions of the tale, I landed on one that allowed me to make some adaptations," she says. Wenger uses the original tale as a jumping off point, allowing her cast to help shape the final product, including additional musical pieces and an actor-choreographed dance.

"It has been fun taking a classic fairy tale and tweaking it to be a little zany," she says. "This is definitely not the Disney play. The result is a fun, sometimes funny show that asks the audience to play along with us." ■

Rose Children's Theatre's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs runs Feb. 20-22 at the Wildish Theatre in Springfield; \$8-\$10, tickets and info at 431-0444 or wkly.ws/1y4.

