

HARUKO CROW NISHIMURA, CO-DIRECTOR
OF DEGENERATE ART ENSEMBLE, IN
REHEARSAL FOR *PREDATOR SONGSTRESS*
AT LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

AMERICAN THEATER STORY

OREGON PERFORMANCE LAB **SEEKS TO BRING
EUGENE THEATER INTO THE HERE AND NOW**

BY ANNA GRACE

PHOTO BY BRUCE CLAYTON TOM

Opening night of *Cloud Nine* at the old Lord Leebrick Theatre, 2001: Willow Norton holds court in the lobby, trash-talking the production. Upon hearing her, the play's director, Corey Pearlstein, emerges from the shadows and introduces himself to the young woman. Spirited discussion ensues.

Valentine's Day, 2007, on a cobblestone street in SoHo, NYC: Snow falls in the settling dusk. As Norton scurries to rehearsal, she catches a glimpse of a man standing in the doorway. Despite his three-piece suit and the theater business he is conducting over the phone, he looks hometown familiar.

"Corey Pearlstein?" Norton asks.

He looks up and says into the phone, "It's someone from Eugene. I'll have to call you back." Ending the call, he smiles. "Hi, Willow. What are you doing in New York?"

Something about the snow in New York and running into someone from home conspired to shake Norton's dream right into conversation. What was she doing in New York? Norton's dream, she told Pearlstein, was to learn how new theater works were created, funded and staged, so that eventually she could return to Eugene and be a part of a vibrant theater scene where she grew up.

WILLOW NORTON AND COREY PEARLSTEIN
PHOTOGRAPHED IN NEW YORK



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