

SPIN CITY

Welcome to *Eugene Weekly's* annual dance issue!
We've got a lot to celebrate.

Since inaugurating the monthly SPIN dance roundup in 2014, we're pleased as punch that it's taken off, gathering enough momentum to warrant two columns per month. Hopefully you're clipping it out and tacking it to your fridge or sharing it online: We want this to be an inclusive, fun way to keep up with what's happening in the world of local dance.

And if you're an artist or presenter, we sincerely hope that this regular coverage brings some shiny new participants and patrons right to your door.

(Not part of the SPIN party yet? Please write to eugeneweeklydance@gmail.com and we'll add you to our list right away, and then you, too, can receive free emails with fabulous submission deadlines.)

Writing the SPIN each month, and features on dance whenever we can, we're struck by the variety and richness of the Eugene dance scene. From modern, ballet and hip-hop companies, to dance studios and workshops, from lively social dances to focused higher education, this creative community abounds with talent and energy.

In this issue we'll shine a spotlight on dancer and teacher Bonnie Simoa. We'll see what's new with the West African Cultural Arts Institute and we'll groove with Coalescence Dance. We're also taking a longer look at the state of dance in our little burg, asking questions about where dance in Eugene has been, and considering how to protect and encourage our community's artistic future.

Spin on! — *Rachael Carnes*

PHOTO BY TRACY SYDOR / TRACYSYDOR.COM

COMMUNITY THROUGH MOTION

FLAIL AND WRITHE LIKE NOBODY'S WATCHING AT COALESCENCE ECSTATIC DANCE BY KELSEY ANNE RANKIN

Across the wood floorboards at WOW Hall, there's a frenzy of writhing limbs, bare feet and butts. In fact, someone farted square in my face while stretching. The crowd is intimate, exchanging kisses on the cheek, sharing bear hugs, grinning widely. Clearly, this is a special gathering.

This is Coalescence Dance, a bi-weekly "ecstatic" dance gathering centered on building community through motion.

I stopped by WOW Hall as a newbie and non-dancer, understanding that Coalescence is ecstatic dance (free-form motion to a variety of music) where talking is not allowed. That day, Coalescence hosted guest DJ Dragonfly.

The event began slowly — the setting sunlight and a few early birds filled the large room. I assumed that I would watch 10 or 15 folks twirl around for two hours; I didn't expect to see a crowd of 98 people flood the room within the first 30 minutes.

An hour passed and the dance floor was taken over by a cohesive, rhythmic mass; despite the music playing over the sound system, each of the dancers seemed to be tuned into a private radio station only they could hear.

"Just tap me on the shoulder if you need me," says group facilitator Paul Deering to the crowd during a lull in the music, "if you can tell which part of me is my shoulder



in that moment." Deering, who has been involved with Coalescence since the early 2000s, has seen the event undergo dramatic changes over the past decade.

When the group regularly met at the now-closed downtown Tango Center in 2006, Deering and other facilitators (Grace Llewellyn, Zan Akerson and Oblio Stroyman) got pumped when just four people showed up. Since then, the group has been working to cultivate

an all-age event for people who want to connect through dance. They post dozens of flyers around town, recruit volunteers for venue set-up and they're extremely welcoming — and eager, to say the very least — towards newcomers.

Eugeneans dig Coalescence's new enthusiasm as the group now meets at two locations: the Vet's Club (Tuesdays at 6 pm) and the WOW Hall (Sundays at 10 am), and typically host 40 to 80 people. There's a sliding scale fee (\$8-\$12), but it's free for first-timers. The crowd is a mix of everyone: toddlers, college kids, professionals, beatniks, town elders. Each person brings a different dance style and skill level to the floor; some people hover on the sidelines, while others go all out.

Among the mass is Llewellyn, a Coalescence facilitator since 2008. Llewellyn started coming to Coalescence to reclaim herself in the midst of single motherhood. She likes to create a space in the center of the floor and mostly dances with closed eyes. "A lot of people come here to dance intimately with other people," she says, "but there's also complete freedom to just dance by yourself — that's what I need. It's liberating."

People come to dance at Coalescence for whatever reason; some just come to get loose and flail around. The core values, however, apply to everyone who shares the space: Be vulnerable, don't judge others and have fun. ■

Throughout the month of October, the Sunday morning Coalescence Dances at WOW Hall will benefit the WOW Wellness Collective. For more information, visit coalescencedance.com.