

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Oregon Ballet Theatre Season Opens

With *Les Sylphides*, *Street Songs* and James Canfield's *Carmina Burana*

If ballet doesn't evolve, it will die," says OBT Artistic Director James Canfield. And if he has his way, ballet and dance will be alive and kicking for a very long time. Part of Canfield's mission is to continually provide his audiences with a continuum of dance at each performance, so that they get a sampling of the traditional, the transitional and the cutting edge.

And his fall opening program promises all this. It opens with a turn of the century "white ballet," "Les Sylphides." Here are your traditionally clad sylphs in a forest setting in stark white, three-quarter-length Romantic tutus. Set to Glazunov's orchestral arrangement of some of Frederic Chopin's most sumptuous and popular piano music, this work is considered one of the most technically demanding in the classical ballet repertoire.

OBT proves that a company that has made its mark with hip contemporary ballet can take on just about anything in the repertoire...

—Dance Magazine

Then the mood, the music and the dance catapult out of the past into the contemporary with "Street Songs" by San Francisco Ballet Resident Choreographer Val Caniparoli. The bodies are sleek in their Star-Trek-like unitards. The movements are

quick, darting and even playful. The music is the percussive soundscape of Carl Orff's "Music for Children," punctuated by timpani, bells, marimbas, xylophones, and even hand-clapping and foot-stomping.

If "Street Songs" is "just yesterday" with regard to dance styles, James Canfield's world-premiere, full-length ballet, "Carmina Burana," promises all the cutting-edge images, risk-taking, and expansion of dance-theatre vocabulary that audiences have come to expect of him.

The musical setting is Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana" for orchestra and choir, which is a cult classic among music buffs with its powerful, almost pagan drive. This music has become even more widely known to less classically oriented ears in the past few years

today's action films than what one associates with art forms from the Middle Ages: debauchery, desire, temptation, gluttony, gambling, sex and more. In a few words, it's about human nature. It's about our ideals and our human flaws.

So, what might you see at a balletic world-premiere of *Carmina Burana*? James Canfield is a unique creator who has successfully merged elements of classical ballet with some hip MTV- and VH1-like production values, growing dance audiences across all social groups. And a world premiere by James Canfield is always a surprise, in more ways than one.

In some of his other works, we have seen dancers in shopping carts, on scaffolds, dangling on ropes, silhouetted behind scrims and even jumping off the stage into the orchestra pit. And his production paraphernalia and props have included strobe lights, smoke, scaffolds, balloons, lasers, snow, candles, incense burners and more. "But among all these elements," Canfield says, "we hope our audiences have experienced new dimensions in dance, and hopefully, new perspectives on art, life and theatre."

You don't want to miss this one

Participate in some more of Oregon Ballet Theatre and James Canfield's surprises and new dimensions in dance...October 10 to 12 and 16 to 18 at Portland Civic Auditorium. With very live music by the OBT Orchestra, Niel DePonte conducting, and the OBT Festival Choir under the direction of Bruce Browne.

For tickets, call 2-BALLET (toll free 1-888-9-BALLET) or Ticketmaster at 790-ARTS.



Blaine Covert © 1996 (Picture: Vanessa Thiessen)

becoming a visceral hit in pop culture circles due, in part, to being featured in the films "The Doors," "Highlander," "Excalibur," "Glory," and others.

The lyrics of *Carmina* come from a collection of 12th- and 13th-century poems and songs. They are riddled with themes more synonymous with



phajja

If you ever have the good fortune to meet the members of Phajja face to face, don't be surprised if they say "hello" in perfect, unintentional harmony. "That comes from singing together non-stop," laughs Kena Epps, who, along with her sister Nakia and Karen Johnson, comprise this stunning R&B vocal trio. Their sultry debut Warner Bros. album, *Seize The Moment*, recalls a time when sophisticated R&B ballads dominated the musical landscape and love was best expressed in song.

Their name means "new beginning" in Arabic, and it well captures the spirit of the group today. "We've been working on this album for a long time," notes Nakia, "and it's a great feeling to see how far we've come." Working with producers and songwriters like Roger Troutman, Michael O'Hara, Troy Patterson, Somethin' For The People and Andrea Martin, Phajja has indeed attracted world-class talent to their side. The results bode well not only for the group itself, but also for the future of R&B.

Seize The Moment kicks off with "I Need You," an a cappella tour-de-force that shows just how intricate Phajja's harmonies can be. Songs like "Never Be Hurt Again" and "What Are You Waiting For?" (the first single from the new album) grapple with the mysteries of love

and loss, while "Sad Story (A Dedication Song)" and "So Long" weave elements of jazz and gospel within Phajja's elegant harmonies.

The songs they chose to record say as much about Phajja as the way the group sings them. "Great songs are great songs," says Nakia. "They never sound dated." As for the group members themselves, despite being in their early 20's, they never fail to impress with their poise and maturity, traits that can be traced to close family ties, dedication to their art and a love of music powerful enough to sustain them through their ten years together as a group.

When the three "old souls" finally came together, they quickly found success, sharing the bill in recent years with such notable artists as Tony Toni Tone!, Arrested Development, and many others. Serving as the group's choreographer, Kena developed a polished theatricality for Phajja, which won fans across the country. "We're very dramatic women," says Nakia with a smile. Not only did audiences take to their high-energy sensuality, critics also counted themselves as Phajja partisans. In fact, Kena, Nakia and Karen took home 1990 Boston Music Awards for Best Vocals and Best Group.

Whatever the coming months may bring, Phajja should have no trouble with that.

PSU hosts piano concerts



Jon Nakamatsu

International piano gold medalist Jon Nakamatsu launches the 1997-98 season of the Portland State Univer-

sity piano recital series this weekend.

He performs Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 4 p.m. Both concerts take place in Lincoln Performance Hall, 1620 S.W. Park. Tickets are \$20 for general admission and \$17 for seniors. They are available at the PSU Box Office and may also be available at the door. Call 725-3307.

The Velvet Rope?



"The Velvet Rope," says Janet, "will mean different things to different people. To me, it became the concept that allowed me to put into words and music so much of what I've been going through. The Velvet Rope is my most personal album." And most extraordinary.

A searcher and innovator, Janet pushes the envelope even further in a record which is being called her most creative and daring. The Velvet Rope is a bold inward journey, a suite of songs remarkable for their cutting-edge power and, in Janet's words, "twisted elegance." Her range of moods and styles has never been vaster, or more appealing. As composer, performer and producer, she pushes pop music in new and intriguing directions. The Velvet Rope is a triumph of the spirit, a declaration of joy and healing that comes from examining the past while energizing the present. The result is a right-now collection of brilliant songs that define the moment even as Janet's ever-evolving sound anticipates the future.

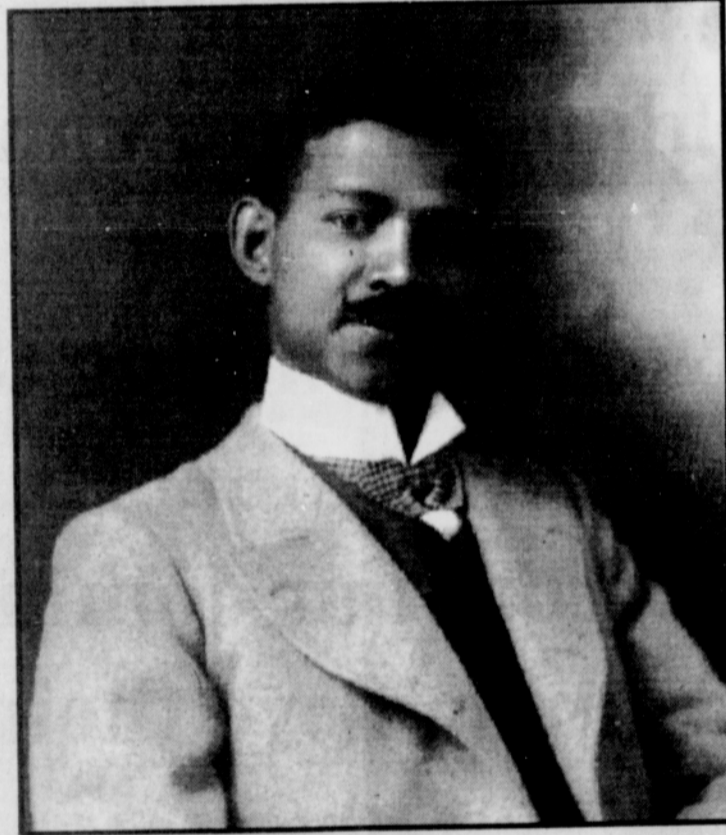
Janet has always thought big. Since her emergence over a decade ago, her albums have been international events, enormous

concepts—Control, Rhythm Nation, Janet., Design of a Decade—reflecting her need to express her soul. The Velvet Rope ups the ante. Her maturity as an artist—her strength as a singer, songwriter and sculptress of musical forms—is evident everywhere, granting her a freedom that feels both exciting and fresh.

Janet is looser; Janet is also more serious, more whimsical, more relaxed and more intense. She turns personal into the universal, tackling the awesome subjects of introspection and romance with subtle charm and ironic wit. Her optimism, the determination that drives her art, frames The Velvet Rope as her most inspiring work. Fans who count on Janet for hop will be more hopeful than ever; fans who count on Janet for out-and-out pleasure—songs which carry us through our days and nights—will be thrilled; fans looking for party jams will be jamming until morning light. The Velvet Rope is a masterpiece operating on multiple levels, exploring the mysteries of sexuality even as it addresses the problems of prejudice. The Velvet Rope is deep.

The Art Perfected

Thomas Cronise Photographs Celebrate Community Spirit



Often playful in nature, Thomas Cronise's photographs illustrate the essence of his subject, whether schools boys posing for a "sports" photo, a Japanese immigrant family, or a father displaying his brood perched upon his back. The Oregon Historical Society presents The Art Perfected, a photograph exhibition featuring twenty portraits from The Cronise Collection, October 7, 1997 through January 11, 1998.

During his 25-year career, Salem photographer Thomas Cronise produced thousands of images of people and places. "The Collection reveals the art perfected," says Susan Seyl, Director of the OHS Photo Archives. "It's images capture a people as they saw themselves, allowing us glimpses at life in another time."

"The works of Oregonian, Thomas Jefferson Cronise, represent what was happening in photography in the

beginning of this century," says Carla Simon, OHS Curator of Collections. "The style of professional photography through equipment manipulation and staging was being refined into an art form."

The twenty photographs in this exhibit were created from 1902-1927 in Cronise's portrait studio in Salem, OR and represent a cross section of the bustling capitol city including images of community leaders, farmers, merchants, as well as mothers and children.

The Art Perfected exhibit is sponsored by the Jeld-Wen Foundation.

The Oregon History Center is located at 1200 SW Park Avenue. Hours: 10-5, Tuesday-Saturday; 12-5 Sunday. Admission: \$6.00/Adults, \$3 Students with ID, \$1.50 Children 6-12, Free to OHS Members and children five and under. For more information, please call 503-222-1741.

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