



OREGON ARTSWATCH

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DANCE

DanceWatch Weekly: White Bird turns 20, OBT season opens

A big week in dance starts with White Bird and Oregon Ballet Theatre and then moves to Indian dance and "Moving Through Darkness"

OCTOBER 5, 2017 // DANCE // JAMUNA CHIARINI

Twenty years ago Paul King and Walter Jaffe moved to Portland from New York City and launched White Bird, Portland's biggest dance presenter and the sole, dance-only presenter West of the Rockies.

Their 20-year contribution to Portland's dance scene and to the dance community at large is huge. Over the 20 years they have presented 250 dance companies from around the world, commissioned and co-commissioned 36 new works in a range of styles and choreographers from Portland and beyond, and have developed some of the most enthusiastic, dedicated, and educated dance audiences I have ever seen. White Bird's 20th season is dedicated to those audiences.

Complexions Contemporary Ballet from New York, co-directed by Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson, opens that season. Rhoden was a principal dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and Richardson was the first Black American Principal dancer at American Ballet Theater.



Jamuna Chiarini

The company is 23 years old itself, and has been called "America's original multicultural dance company." They pride themselves on being based in ballet but not limited to it, expanding their movement vocabulary into any and every genre, proposing an alternate view of classical ballet.

The company will perform three pieces, all choreographed by Rhoden:

Ballad Unto.... for 14 dancers, performed to Bach, that explores love's many facets; *IMPRINT/MAYA*, a solo performed by Richardson, danced to a pre-recorded track featuring Melanie Nyema on Vocals, Ron Pedley on piano and Mat Fields on bass and the words of Maya Angelou; and *STAR DUST*, a tribute to David Bowie.

Journalist Joe Lynch, for Billboard magazine online, stated in his impassioned review of *STAR DUST* after it premiered at The Joyce Theatre in New York in January, that *STAR DUST* "isn't a cheap attempt to capitalize on Bowie's fame, but a thoughtful exploration by choreographer Dwight Rhoden of the way movement reveals additional layers in Bowie's music (something Bowie himself did onstage, mimicking gifted movers from Pierrot the Clown to kabuki actors over the course of his career)." Lynch says if you're a Bowie fan, "Star Dust is a must—whether you think you enjoy the ballet or not."

Oregon Ballet Theatre kicks off its season this weekend with the world premiere of *Rhapsody In Blue*, a collaboration between Oregon Ballet Theatre resident choreographer Nicolo Fonte and Pink Martini founder Thomas Lauderdale. With permission from the Gershwin Foundation, Lauderdale created a new arrangement of George Gershwin's jazz classic that lengthens the score, draws out nuances in the music, and allows for more movement possibilities.

The score, originally created for a solo piano and jazz band, will instead be performed live on two grand pianos by Lauderdale and Hunter Noack. The program also includes *Never Stop Falling (in Love)*, Fonte's 2014 piece created for Oregon Ballet Theatre's 25th anniversary. It features Pink Martini singer China Forbes and a medley of Pink Martini songs.

Rhapsody In Blue the dance, softly weaves together abstract contemporary ballet choreography with a narrative describing the mood of the blue hour or "L'heure bleue." A French phrase with no exact English translations, it describes the magical hours between daylight and night that lovers might meet before returning home to their spouses. A kind of magical time of day when things become less linear and boundaries become more fluid.

Last week I sat in on a rehearsal for *Rhapsody In Blue* as the costume designer was trying out different costume possibilities on the dancers. The room was abuzz with activity, full of company dancers, stage managers, costume designers, lighting designers, and other artistic personal. I am always amazed at what a massive production ballets are and how many people it takes to put a production together, compared to many smaller productions I regularly see where the choreographer does almost everything.

The costumes for *Rhapsody* are a gorgeous, textural mix of electric blues in satins, laces, brocades, and matte cottons, with swirling skirts, and tailored suits, evoking decadent sumptuousness and ease. The movement, like the chosen color, is also electric and explosive, shooting out from the dancer's centers like arrows, creating dramatic, stretched lines with arms and legs. The movement sweeps and falls, rebounds and flies, describing the music and the space around the notes perfectly. Sometimes the dancing is large and uses the whole cast and sometimes it is quiet and uses a singular gesture. It's a beautiful, dynamic work that might make you see/hear Gershwin's *Rhapsody In Blue* in a whole new light.

Performances this week



Complexions Contemporary Ballet. Sachyn Mital Photography

Ballad Unto...., *IMPRINT/MAYA*, and *STAR DUST*
Complexions Contemporary Ballet

VIVALDI: THE RED PRIEST,
THE POET

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Choreography by Dwight Rhoden
Presented by White Bird
October 5-7
Newmark Theatre, 1111 SW Broadway
See above.



Eugene Ballet Company's Mowgli. Photo courtesy of Eugene Ballet.

Mowgli – The Jungle Book Ballet-Eugene

Eugene Ballet Company directed by Toni Pimble

October 6-8

Hult Center for the Performing Arts, 1 Eugene Center, Eugene

Toni Pimble, the artistic director of Eugene Ballet, retells Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book" through ornate costumes, masks, sets, and world music, in the story of orphaned Mowgli, his friend Baloo the Bear, the terrifying Tiger Shere Khan and the snake Kaa.



Dance artist Oluyinka Akinjiola performing at Ten Tiny Dances in Beaverton.

Moving through Darkness

This is a Black Spatial Imaginary

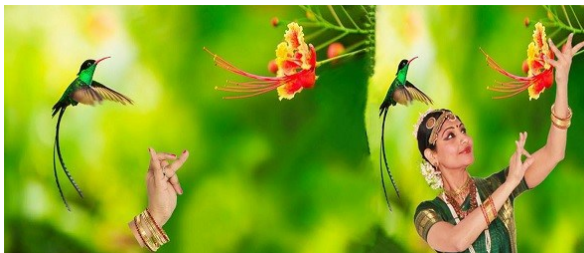
Featuring Intisar Abioto, Akela Auer, and Oluyinka Akinjiola

5 pm October 7

Paragon Arts Gallery, 815 N Killingsworth St.

Moving through Darkness, is a movement and dance performance featuring writer, dancer, photographer, and the author/photographer/curator of *The Black Portlanders* **Intisar Abioto**; writer, poet, dancer, and choreographer **Akela Auer**; and dancer, choreographer, teacher, scholar and artistic director of Rejoice! Diaspora Dance Theatre, **Oluyinka Akinjiola**.

"This Is A Black Spatial Imaginary" considers the movement and fixity of Black communities, by activating past, present and future spaces for Black life. This is a Black Spatial Imaginary brings together installation, video, print media, performance, and public intervention, exploring new forms of practice at the intersection of art, collaboration, historical record, urban planning, collaboration and creative exchange."



Bharatanatyam dancer Jayanthi Raman. Photo courtesy of Jayanthi Raman.

Dance Of The Hummingbirds

Jayanthi Raman and dancers

7 pm October 7

Dolores Winningstad Theater, 1111 SW Broadway

Combining live music, poetry by Oregon poet laureate Paulann Petersen, artwork by Shashank Rao, and guest dancers from Chennai, India, Portland Bharatanatyam choreographer/teacher Jayanthi Raman reflects on finding inner strength to overcome life's obstacles in her new work *Dance Of The Hummingbirds*.



Rhapsody in Blue by Nicolo Fonte. Photo courtesy of Oregon Ballet Theatre.

Rhapsody In Blue (World Premiere) and Never Stop Falling (in Love)

Choreography by Nicolo Fonte

Performed by Oregon Ballet Theatre directed by Kevin Irving

October 7-14
Keller Auditorium, 222 SW Clay St.
See above.

Upcoming Performances

October

October 11, [Diálogos: An evening of flamenco conversation and performance](#), presented by Espacio Flamenco Portland
October 12-14, [Paul Taylor Dance Company](#), presented by White Bird
October 13-14, [The Northwest Screendance Exposition](#), directed by John Watson, presented by the University of Oregon Department of Dance, Eugene
October 19-21, [Wen Wei Wang \(World Premiere\)](#), [Luca Signoretti \(World Premiere\)](#), [At Some Hour You Return](#) by Jiri Pokorný, NW Dance Project
OCT 20-22, [Abominable](#), Taylor A. Eggán and Daniel Addy
October 20-22, [Uprise](#), Rejoice! Diaspora Dance Theater
October 22, [Le Corsaire](#), Bolshoi Ballet in Cinema Live from Moscow
October 26, [Cocktail Hour: The Show](#), choreography by Marilyn Klaus, presented by Seacoast Entertainment Association
October 26-November 5, [Diva Practice \(Solo\)](#), Kaj-anne Pepper
October 26-28, [Dancenorth Australia](#), presented by White Bird
October 27-29, [Nous, on va danser](#), Nancy Ellis
October 31, [Opus Cactus](#), MOMIX, Eugene

November

November 2-10, [Avalanche](#), Polaris Dance Theatre, Robert Guitron
November 3-5, [Converge](#), PDX Contemporary Ballet
November 4, [ICONIC](#), A Fundraiser to support Performance Works NW Programming
November 9-12, [When We](#), Allie Hankins & Rachael Dichter, a PWNW Alembic Co-Production
November 15, [The Hip Hop Nutcracker Featuring MC Kurtis Blow](#), Decadancetheatre
November 16-18, [L-E-V](#), presented by White Bird
November 24-26, [The Enchanted Toyshop](#) by John Clifford, [Tourbillon](#) by Anne Mueller, performed by the PSU Orchestra and The Portland Ballet
November 26, [The Taming Of The Shrew](#), Bolshoi Ballet in Cinema Live from Moscow
November 30-December 9, [Lexicon \(world premiere\)](#), BodyVox

December

December 7-9, [Bolero](#), Ihsan Rustem, NW Dance Project
December 8-9, [The Nutcracker with Chamber Ballet of Corvallis](#), Rainbow Dance Theatre, Corvallis
December 9-24, [George Balanchine's The Nutcracker](#), Oregon Ballet Theatre
December 13-17, [a world, a world \(work-in-progress\)](#), Linda Austin Dance, PWNW
December 17, [The Nutcracker](#), Bolshoi Ballet in Cinema Live from Moscow
December 22-24, [The Nutcracker with Orchestra Next](#), Eugene Ballet Company, Eugene

January

January 18-28, [Fertile Ground Festival of New Work/Groovin' Greenhouse](#)
January 25-27, [Rennie Harris Puremovement](#), presented by White Bird
January 28, [Garden of Earthly Delights with Salem Concert Band \(World premiere\)](#), Rainbow Dance Theatre, Independence

February

February 1-10, [The skinner|kirk DANCE ENSEMBLE](#), presented by BodyVox
February 4, [The Lady Of The Camellias](#), Bolshoi Ballet in Cinema Live from Moscow
February 17-18, [Pink Martini](#), Eugene Ballet Company, Eugene
February 21, [Mark Morris Dance Group](#), presented by White Bird
February 23-25, [Configure](#), PDX Contemporary Ballet
February 24-March 4, [Alice \(in wonderland\)](#), choreography by Septime Webre, performed by Oregon Ballet Theatre

March

March 1-3, [Urban Bush Women](#), presented by White Bird
March 4, [The Flames Of Paris](#), Bolshoi Ballet in Cinema Live from Moscow
March 8-10, [Jessica Lang Dance](#), presented by White Bird
March 14, [Compañía Jesús Carmona](#), presented by White Bird
March 15-17, [World Premiere's by Sarah Slipper and Cayetano Soto](#), NW Dance Project
March 22-24, [To Have It All](#), choreography by Katie Scherman, presented by BodyVox

April

April 4, [iLumiDance](#), Rainbow Dance Theatre, Corvallis
April 5, [Earth Angel and other repertory works](#), Rainbow Dance Theatre, Corvallis
April 5-7, [Stephen Petronio Company](#), presented by White Bird
April 8, [Giselle](#), Bolshoi Ballet in Cinema Live from Moscow
April 12-14, [Contact Dance Film Festival](#), presented by BodyVox and Northwest Film Center
Apr 14-25, [Peer Gynt with Orchestra Next](#), Eugene Ballet Company, Eugene
April 12-21, [Man/Woman](#), choreography by Mikhail Fokine, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Nicolo Fonte, James Canfield, Jifí Kylián, performed by Oregon Ballet Theatre
April 20-29, [X-Posed](#), Polaris Dance Theatre, Robert Guitron
April 24-25, [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#), presented by White Bird
April 24-25, [The Wind and the Wild](#), BodyVox and Chamber Music Northwest

May

May 4-5, [Current/Classic](#), The Portland Ballet
May 10-12, [New work premiere](#), Rainbow Dance Theatre, Western Oregon University, Monmouth
May 10-19, [Rain & Roses \(world premiere\)](#), BodyVox
May 11-13, [Compose](#), PDX Contemporary Ballet
May 16, [Ballet Hispánico](#), presented by White Bird
May 23-June 3, [Closer](#), original works by the dancers of Oregon Ballet Theatre

June

June 8-10, [Up Close](#), The Portland Ballet
June 10, [Coppelia](#), Bolshoi Ballet in Cinema Live from Moscow
June 14-16, [World Premiere – Ihsan Rustem, MemoryHouse – Sarah Slipper](#), NW Dance Project
June 24, [Salem World Beat](#), Rainbow Dance Theatre, Salem

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4 Responses.

1. **Laura Paul** says:

October 5, 2017 at 12:10 pm

Thank you Paul and Walter!!
You've enriched our lives totally!

2. **Laura Paul** says:

October 5, 2017 at 12:11 pm

Thank you Walter and Paul!!
You have enriched our lives totally!

3. **David Rozenatt** says:

October 5, 2017 at 8:51 pm

Hello,
David Rozenblatt is the composer of IMPRINT/MAYA for Desmond Richardson.
Danced to a pre-recorded track featuring Melanie Nyema on Vocals, Ron Pedley on piano and
Mat Fieldes on bass.

Thank you

Jamuna Chiarini says:

October 6, 2017 at 11:44 am

Thank you so much! I have added in the correct info.

Comments are closed.

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