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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BALLET FANTASTIQUE AIMS TO INSPIRE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS BY COMBINING  
SCHOOL WITH DANCE

In spring 2007, Ballet Fantastique begins a pilot arts residency through its EXPERIENCE DANCE! Project. Professional dancers will work with teachers at Harris and Moffitt elementary schools in Eugene and Springfield from April to June to create a program exploring academic subjects through the art of dance.

Ballet Fantastique's Executive Director Hannah Bontrager describes the project concept, "Instead of reading about a tornado, kids dance a tornado." Ballet Fantastique is a non-profit training chamber ballet company and academy in Eugene.

"Because dance is such a powerful tool, I plan to enact an arts-in-education program that builds this interdisciplinary approach into the elementary school arts curriculum, while laying the groundwork for students to become sophisticated thinkers later in life," says Bontrager.

According to Bontrager, "Children don't learn as much when they just see something in front of them as they do when they get in and take a closer look." This non-traditional classroom approach provides students with the opportunity to draw connections between various subjects and build sophisticated and creative learning styles.

Participating children will also learn about dance, gain ownership of the artistic medium and explore basic elements of creative movement in their own bodies. Ballet Fantastique hopes to ensure that local children have the chance to experience the power of vibrant classical dance.

Bontrager notes, "This project is exciting and unique among other outreach programs because it integrates dance with other kinds of classroom learning. Through it, teachers can challenge already excelling students while also giving under-performing kids the chance to feel successful in the classroom." She continues, "Plus, this project fills the need for arts education in our community."

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The dance company will work with Harris Elementary School in Eugene and Moffitt Elementary School in Springfield, which is a Title 1 school (a high percentage of students come from low-income families). These schools, like many in the U.S., continue to face arts education budget cuts. Teachers are often forced to act as substitute art teachers without any formal training.

Moffitt Elementary's second grade teacher Nancy Wing says, "I'm so excited to have my students participate. Many of them have had very little exposure to ballet and any arts education projects." She continues, "I'm excited that Hannah is going to make her lessons transfer into our study of birds."

Ballet Fantastique directors hope to fully implement this project as a model for other dance organizations across the state, expanding it over the years while continuing to inspire students and build relationships with children in the community.

The EXPERIENCE DANCE! Project is funded by a Lane Arts Council grant, with support from the City of Eugene Cultural Services Division.

Please contact Hannah Bontrager at (541) 206-8977 or [director@balletfantastique.org](mailto:director@balletfantastique.org) for applications and details about the project.