

# From the Heartland to the Orient

DanceMotion USA sends Trey McIntyre Project on an Asian tour.

BY KRISTIN SCHWAB



Trey McIntyre (left); TMP dancer Chanel DaSilva leaps over amber waves of grain.

With a contemporary ballet company based in Boise, Idaho, and work inspired by topics such as the fields of the heartland and rebuilding New Orleans, choreographer Trey McIntyre is a classic slice of Americana. In 2009, he made a piece about Glacier National Park, *The Sun Road*, that *Dance Magazine* reviewer Theodore Bale called, “One of the most truly American ballets I’ve seen in years.”

Since its 2005 launch, Trey McIntyre Project has performed in Europe and South America, but this summer, the group will make its debut in Asia as part of the DanceMotion USA project (see story on page 13). Venturing to China, South Korea, the Philippines and Vietnam, TMP will present three of McIntyre’s works: *In Dreams*, set to songs by Roy Orbison; *Leatherwing Bat*, an ode to childhood with music by Peter, Paul and Mary; and (*serious*), a trio for two men and one woman clad in business attire.

In addition to performing, TMP will conduct outreach activities with surrounding communities, and McIntyre will select one international company to tour the U.S. in the program’s first true exchange. *Dance Teacher* talked to him about his expectations for the company’s summer abroad.

**Dance Teacher:** What do you hope to convey about your company and American contemporary dance?

**Trey McIntyre:** Being from Kansas,

the work I make is influenced by that sense of the Great Plains—wide open space and connection to the ground and your neighbors. The works we’re bringing are very representative of that. We have an earnestness—a feeling of “We can do it! We can make it!”—and I think that optimism, openness and generosity are deeply American things.

**DT:** What will you be looking for when choosing an international company to come to the U.S.?

**TM:** I’m looking for a company that’s an extreme contrast to what we do. Maybe a company that’s more traditional or rooted in folk dance. But I don’t want to plan too much. I want to stay open and see the connection when I get there and not miss an opportunity.

**DT:** Your company has traveled the world. Why did you pick Idaho as a home base?

**TM:** I had a friend here who wanted to present us, and we developed a momentum with the community very quickly. There were a lot of funding temptations to base the company in New York or San Francisco, but it was hard to justify going to an area that well-served. There are so many complaints about the arts not being appreciated in small communities—and why would they be, unless people there are being exposed to a high level of them on a regular basis? Could we move into a community and create the same kind of loyalty

the football team has? We have—the city has really embraced us.

**DT:** What do you think makes your work accessible to a wide audience, both in the U.S. and overseas?

**TM:** I make sure I’m being an effective communicator and bringing people along for the ride. I want people to be able to have an experience the first time they see it, but continue to find more if they watch it 10 times. My goal with any work is to speak from a place of honesty, and I start by examining what that truth is for myself. I think it provides a portal for any audience member to find pieces of themselves in the work.

**DT:** What has influenced your career the most?

**TM:** I remember seeing a Murray Louis performance in Wichita when I was 12. It was modern dance, and I didn’t know what that was. I was so confused by the show and felt uncomfortable. But what stuck with me was the question and answer afterward. I realized how participatory dance is. The audience is what completes it. At that moment, dance opened up for me.

When we go to schools, the kids want to see what the dancers can do, but a dialogue is most effective. Once a kid asked, “My parents don’t want me to dance. Have you had that experience?” Our main message to young people is that you set your own path and you can have a future that fulfills you. Outreach opportunities give kids an accessible role model. **DT**