



Ballet Wichita

WICHITA

Kansas's oldest and largest ballet company, Ballet Wichita has worked for more than 30 years to provide training for dancers, both through classes and by hosting major dance companies to present master classes and perform for the Wichita community. Ballet Wichita performs two or three times a year, and works to make its performances accessible through family-friendly events, free concerts, in-school residency programs, and tours to areas of Kansas that are underserved in the arts.

In FY 2007, Ballet Wichita received an NEA Challenge America grant of \$10,000 to bring the internationally touring dance

company Momix to Wichita, the company's first visit to this city. On October 13, 2007, Momix held a free master class at Wichita State University for 36 Ballet Wichita members and other local dance students. The class focused on the dance company's unique style—a combination of athleticism and acrobatics with traditional ballet, described by *The Wichita Eagle* as creating “alternate realities of multi-limbed creatures, slithering and pulsing propulsion and bodies that appear to pull apart or take flight.”

Momix's residency also included in-school programs for more than 50 third- and fifth-graders at a Wichita elementary school and more than 250 high school students. At each school they provided dance demonstrations and taught the

Kansas

Momix performs *Dreamcatcher* as part of Best of Momix, presented by Ballet Wichita on October 13, 2008.

Photo by Don Perdue

students some basic poses.

Momix concluded its residency with a public performance at Wichita's Century II Performing Arts & Convention Center on October 13, 2008. More than 750 people attended the performance, titled Best of Momix. Since a public school in-service day prevented many students from being involved in Momix's residency programs, Ballet Wichita arranged for students to receive vouchers to attend the performance.

By bringing renowned dance companies such as Momix to Wichita, Ballet Wichita introduces audiences to new and inventive dance performances, as well as exceptional dance companies. Ballet Wichita Executive Director Barbara Chamberlin describes the NEA's support as vital to giving Ballet Wichita the means to bring such prestigious dance companies to Wichita. She said, “We want people to grow up being interested in dance.” By bringing such exciting and innovative companies to town, interest in the art form grows.