

NWCT Announces Master Lease of Historic Building, Establishment of Performing Arts Center for Children

**NORTHWEST
CHILDRENS
THEATER and
SCHOOL**

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Cultural Center
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*Our mission—to educate,
entertain and enrich the lives
of young audiences*

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Carolyn Newsom

Volunteer Director
Diane Carlson

Northwest Children's Theater and School (NWCT) is pleased to announce the signing of a master lease with the board of directors of the Northwest Neighborhood Cultural Center (NNCC), NWCT's home since its inception in 1993. As of 5 p.m. on July 2, 2009, NWCT took over full operations of the building.

"This is huge," says NWCT founder and managing director Judy Kafoury. "Our vision for the building is truly inspiring, and we are working with wonderful community partners to make the vision a reality. We are incredibly grateful to the building's board of directors, as well as our own board of directors for negotiating this master lease." Founder and education director Carolyn Newsom adds, "We are delighted to provide the kind of programming we've always dreamed of, and to create an arts center for Portland's children, who so deserve an artistic home and place to express themselves."

NWCT's immediate plans for building improvements include full-scale interior painting and cleaning, in addition to maintenance and improvements to the parking lot, and restroom facility upgrades. There will also be an increase in security measures already in place. These upgrades and changes have long been on NWCT's wish list as a tenant; a master lease puts NWCT in full control of the planning and execution of such upgrades, a welcome change for the many patron families and students of NWCT and other tenants in the building. "One of the most common questions to NWCT from students and families was 'Why don't you fix up the building?'" reports Melody Bridges, Development and Marketing Director for NWCT. "Before the master lease,

we weren't permitted to make the kind of tenant improvements we wanted. Now we can do the things we've longed to do literally since we first stepped foot in the door in 1993."

NWCT's immediate plans also include increased programming, answering a long-standing call for more performing arts programming for pre-school, elementary, middle and high school students in the greater Portland area. The building will become a performing arts center for children, with NWCT as its most visible tenant and managing body. Other tenants will include the Portland Symphonic Girl Choir, an NNCC tenant for two years, and A Renaissance School of Arts and Sciences, a brand-new private elementary school slated to open in September 2009. Other arts partners in a variety of disciplines, from theater to music to dance, are being sought for tenancy and arts programming for children ages 3 to 18.

The performing arts center for children will be the only one of its kind in the Portland metropolitan area, encompassing all aspects of performing arts training for the next generation of artists, patrons and professionals. Keeping the arts accessible for all children will be a main focus of the new performing arts center, with continued funding sought to provide scholarships for classes. NWCT itself will begin a dance program in fall of 2009, with plans to turn one classroom into a dance studio. Other changes will include turning one of the building's largest spaces into a black box rehearsal studio and performance space for use by NWCT, as well as for rental to area arts organizations starting in fall 2009.

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