

Oratrix, an all-female queer slam poetry troupe from Seattle, will hit Eugene on Saturday as the last stop on their "All Girl. All Words." tour.

The seven members -- Katinka Kraft, Brenda Brown, Alexandria Red, Tara Hardy, Amy Mahoney, Gigi Grinstad and Kristin Aurora -- are taking their poems on their first tour after a one-year performance period in Seattle. Oratrix left for Oregon and California last Saturday and has already appeared in Portland, San Francisco, Davis, Calif., Sacramento, Calif., and San Jose, Calif. They perform fast-paced individual and group slam poems on topics including politics and sex.

"Our mission is to write and to tell, and to encourage others to write and to tell, especially queers," Hardy said.

Three years ago, Hardy said she was one of two queer poets in Seattle that she knew of, so she decided to open a writing institute for queer writers so she could meet others like herself.

"I was lonely, and I wanted other queer poets to join me," she said.

While teaching at her school, The Bent Institute, Hardy met the future members of Oratrix and they worked on pieces together for two years before taking the stage.

"We were the core group from the writing class," Mahoney said. "We went far and beyond what the class did for us by starting the troupe."

Oratrix, which means "she who speaks" in Latin, did their first show in September 2002 at a poetry house in Seattle. Shortly after, they performed at several universities in Washington and Oregon. Kraft said their biggest

success so far was working at Bumpershoot, a four-day arts festival in Seattle. At Bumpershoot, Oratrix performed and taught a workshop on writing group poetry.

"We are unique because we write many of our poems together," Kraft said.

Hardy described the show as "dazzling, shocking, high-energy, intense and fun" and said the poets speak about thought-provoking topics such as social class, break-ups, gender, race, graphic sexuality and their opposition to President Bush.

"Art is a powerful social change tool, and we're all about it," she said.

Mahoney said the members come from diverse backgrounds, which allows them to cover many different issues in their poems.

"The beauty of our troupe is that we show how differences can complement each other so well," she said.

Besides scoring a tour and performing at Bumpershoot, Mahoney said Oratrix has succeeded at building a community of queer poets.

"At The Bent Institute, we were able to work with other queer artists, promote them and network with them," she said.

Kraft said the troupe hopes to continue growing as performers and expressing themselves verbally.

"We are inventing ourselves and creating ourselves as female performers and saying what we need to say," she said.

Oratrix will perform Saturday at 9:30 p.m. at Sam Bond's Garage, located at 407 Blair Blvd. Tickets are \$5.

'All girl' poetry



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Oregon Daily Emerald
The independent campus newspaper at the University of Oregon

The seven-member poetry troupe Oratrix brings its show to Sam Bond's Garage this weekend
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Pulse Reporter
October 23, 2003