

# BALLET *ballet like you've never seen it before.* FANTASTIQUE

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## QUICK FACTS:

- **WHAT:** Ballet Fantastique's all-new contemporary ballet, **ZORRO®**
- The re-telling of the famed legend of the masked Diego de la Vega, with **LIVE MUSIC:** the LA-based band Incendio and violinist Kim Angelis
- **WHEN:** Fri. Oct. 18, 7:30pm; Sat. Oct. 19, 7:30pm; Sun. Oct. 20, 2:30pm
- **WHERE:** Soreng Theater, Hult Center
- **CHOREOGRAPHY:** All-original, from choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager
- **TICKETS:** \$28-48 (discounts for students/youth *and* groups of six or more). On sale now through the Hult Center Box Office: 541-682-5000 or [www.hultcenter.org](http://www.hultcenter.org) Advance ticket purchase highly recommended (Ballet Fantastique's last three shows sold out).

## **Ballet Fantastique tells the origin story of the famed masked crusader in the first-ever ballet version of ZORRO®, Oct. 18-20 at the Hult**

Opening Ballet Fantastique's NEW LEGENDS Hult Center season is the premiere of **ZORRO® The Ballet**, running Oct. 18-20 at the Hult Center's Soreng Theater. From the daredevil imaginations of Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager, the company's acclaimed producer-choreographer team, comes this contemporary ballet re-telling of the famed legend of the masked Diego de la Vega, better known as "El Zorro" ("The Fox"). The all-original production will feature live original music by the LA-based band Incendio, as well as virtuoso violinist-composer Kim Angelis.

First introduced in 1919, the character of Zorro has been featured in nearly 100 iterations, including novels, films, television series, comics, and theatrical productions. Ballet Fantastique is honored to have been invited by the LA-based Zorro, Inc. out of LA (international copyright holders of the Zorro character) to create this authorized ballet re-telling of the work. They see BFan—with its track record of creating unique, highly collaborative contemporary ballet premieres—as the ideal company to reimagine the legend through dance. *NOTE: Contact information for Zorro, Inc. available by request.*

And true to Ballet Fantastique form, the telling will be unique. Donna and Hannah have chosen to focus not on the conquests of the legendary crusader, but rather on the forces that created him. Their **ZORRO®** ballet is an origin story for the hero, set in a world in flux: Spanish America and Barcelona—the New World and the Old—a backdrop including the conflict between Native Americans and Spanish conquistadors, the corruption of Napoleonic rule, and great rivals from worlds of privilege. And in this shifting context, the persona of Zorro is formed, a great hero is born, and the legend begins.

"We wanted to really explore the *making* of the Zorro character in this new work," says Donna Bontrager. "Our ballet is a mischievous exploration of his complexities and the forces and women that shape him. The son of an aristocratic Spanish landowner and a Native American female Tongva warrior who literally meet each other in battle, our hero becomes two distinct people. There is Diego, lover of peace and wisdom—and Zorro, force of change, clever trickster, famous lover."

"We also wanted to delve into the story's fascinating, shifting historical context, using our unique brand of

narrative contemporary ballet to present this story as a legend for our time,” says Hannah. “It’s not too hard to relate to a protagonist’s struggle to manage his dueling personas in a shifting global context—it is a contemporary story, really.”

As Donna alludes, the Bontragers’ *ZORRO*® telling will re-cast the character’s female conquests as autonomous forces who challenge and shape him, including: Toypurina, the Native American medicine woman opposing Spanish colonization in California; intelligent Juliana, who challenges Diego/Zorro as he learns to accept the duality of his character; and feisty Isabel, bored with the tedium of aristocratic life for women—who takes on the Zorro identity herself to redefine societal expectation. New company dancer Fabio Simoes, from Portugal, will dance the title role of Diego/Zorro—he is the winning candidate of Ballet Fantastique’s international audition search for a new position funded by the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation out of Portland. Simoes is a graduate from the prestigious Escola de Danca do Conservatorio Nacional, and boasts multiple international awards in contemporary ballet choreography and solo performance. Company artist Caitlin Christopher will dance the part of Toypurnia, the Tongva warrior princess (based on a real-life female warrior). Krislyn Wessel is the shaman White Owl, Justin Feimster is Bernardo (with Leanne Mizzoni as his loyal love, *Light in the Night*), and real-life sisters Hannah Bontrager and Ashley Bontrager dance the parts of Spanish sisters Juliana and Isabel. Newcomer Lydia Rakov from NYC dances the part of the gypsy, Amalia. The story’s strong dramatic arc begins with Act I in what is now LA, and Act II takes place in Old World Barcelona as Diego/Zorro face the Rafael Moncada (guest artist Simon Longnight), with returning favorite guest circus artist Raymond Silos as his rapier-wielding sidekick.

Ballet Fantastique’s ambitious re-interpretation of the classic story also includes its trademark cross-disciplinary collaborations. Asserting the breadth and cultural vibrancy of our home and building new connections between artists from across the region, Donna and Hannah are partnering with Astoria-based virtuoso violinist-composer Kim Angelis ([www.skysong.com](http://www.skysong.com)), who performs her unique brand of gypsy-flamenco contemporary string music across the world. From LA will come the Latin-fusion band Incendio (in Spanish: “fire”), who last collaborated with Ballet Fantastique when the company toured to the Seattle area. Incendio’s original music is as playful and fiery as Angelis’s original music is haunting.

“The uniqueness of my portion of the music for *ZORRO*® lies in its defiance of categorization; elements of classical and gypsy music immediately come to mind,” says Angelis. “This is a musical style that you probably haven’t heard any other violinist playing!”

“The band really loves the fact that the Ballet Fantastique keeps pushing,” says JP Durand, guitarist and co-founder of Incendio. “Their level of love and commitment to their work is really high, so rather than come back and repeat a slightly tweaked version of what we did before, BFan is putting together a whole new work with a different vision. Their work ethic is similar to ours, so it’s a really good fit, and we look forward to combining our visions once again.”

As part of their telling, BFan’s critically-acclaimed resident choreographer team Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager will fuse and abstract diverse dance styles (including early CA folk dance, flamenco, tango, and *pasa doble*) as a springboard for the story’s dramatic themes and playful narrative arc. And this means that Ballet Fantastique’s company dancers are rising to yet another new challenge, in both the style and content of their performance as athletes and artists.

“I am really excited about dancing the part of Toypurnia,” says company dancer Caitlin Christopher. “Toypurnia is completely different than any other character I’ve been asked to play. She is incredibly fierce and athletic, she’s a warrior. I am challenged as an actress to show how my character relationship develops with Alejandro as my character meets him in the heat of battle—where they are enemies—and to show how this develops into love.”

“With *ZORRO*®, we are again setting a new precedent,” says company dancer Leanne Mizzoni. “As a dancer, it’s so exciting to be part of creating something that’s always new.”

*ZORRO*® *The Ballet* is filled with the company’s signatures: fresh perspective, original choreography, and evocative cross-disciplinary collaborations. With its dramatic, witty storytelling, brilliant live music, and playful

dance theater, you can see why *Portland Monthly* calls Ballet Fantastique “imaginative geniuses.”

Costumes are designed by Donna Marisa Bontrager in collaboration with Ballet Fantastique’s resident designers, Allison Ditson and Rita Perini-Vance. UO History grad and dramaturge Genna Speer supports Donna and Hannah with libretto and research support. Lights will be designed by Mollie Clevidence. Grant support from the Oregon Cultural Trust.

**Also coming up:** Open Barre, Ballet Fantastique’s unique Wednesday night open rehearsal series at the City Center for Dance (960 Oak, downtown Eugene), is back. Guests can enjoy a tasting of local wine from Domaine Meriwether, light hors d’oeuvres inspired by the concept, and an open rehearsal with Donna and Hannah and the dancers, for a suggested donation of \$10—free for season subscribers. (Musicians are part of some Open Barre rehearsals; check the Ballet Fantastique website for details.)

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