

BALLET

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FANTASTIQUE

**DONNA MARISA BONTRAGER
+ HANNAH BONTRAGER**
DIRECTORS + CHOREOGRAPHER-PRODUCERS
www.balletfantastique.org | 541-342-4611
960 oak | downtown eugene, or 97401
get social with us: facebook | twitter | youtube | pinterest | flickr

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Contact Information:

Hannah Bontrager, Ballet Fantastique Executive Director

Mobile phone/direct email (not for publication): 541-206-8977; balletfantastique@gmail.com

QUICK FACTS:

- **WHAT:** Ballet Fantastique's contemporary ballet premiere of *The Odyssey: The Ballet*, with LIVE looping musician, Cullen Vance
- **CONCEPT + CHOREOGRAPHY:** All-original interpretation of Homer's *The Odyssey*, by choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager
- **EUGENE PERFORMANCES:** Fri. Feb. 27, 7:30pm; Sat. Feb. 28, 7:30pm; Sun. Mar. 1, 2:30pm, Soreng Theater, Hult Center
- **TICKETS:** \$29-49 (students/youth \$17-23), with \$5 off regularly priced tickets for groups of six or more. On sale now through the Hult Center Box Office: 541-682-5000 or www.hultcenter.org; Box Office hours T-F, 12-5pm; Sat. 11am-3pm

***The Odyssey: The Ballet*, Feb. 27 – Mar. 1 at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts**

Ballet Fantastique premieres its first contemporary ballet of 2015 with a bold new work: ***The Odyssey: The Ballet***, Fri. Feb. 27–Sun. Mar. 1 at the Hult Center in downtown Eugene. Ballet Fantastique Choreographer-Producers—and mother-daughter team—Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager are teaming up with local live looping electric violinist and composer Cullen Vance to create a new dance theater telling of Homer's ancient poem, thought to be one of the oldest extant works of Western literature (8th century BC).

"This is the homeward voyage of a great warrior hero," says Donna Marisa Bontrager, Artistic Director of Ballet Fantastique. "Our choreography explores these great themes at the heart of the story—the triumph of the human spirit against incredible danger, the enduring power of love."

Vance will perform live with Ballet Fantastique's dancers in this unique project on stage at the Soreng Theater. In addition to Vance's original live looping compositions, the Bontragers have chosen a score that also includes recordings of Audiomachine, Max Richter, and Lyre 'n' Rhapsody, an all-female acoustic ensemble from Athens that re-works fragments of music and lyrical poetry from ancient Greek composers and poets.

"We are so honored not only to be working with Cullen, but also to have received permission to use the music of these internationally-recognized musical groups for our project," says Hannah Bontrager, Executive Director of Ballet Fantastique and co-Choreographer-Producer for Ballet Fantastique. "It feels like the music almost 'found' us—it truly explores and

evokes the range of Odysseus's encounters and the characters in this great story. Some of it is so big it swallows you, some of it so subtle it just melts. The music is informing every step of new choreography. We're in love with our *Odyssey* and know our audience will love it, too. It's unlike anything we've ever done before."

Ballet Fantastique's *The Odyssey: The Ballet* opens with Vance's original "Invocation of the Muse" (dancer Ashley Bontrager), then sets the story's context—Odysseus, King of Ithaca (dancer Fabio Simoes), imprisoned on the island of the nymph-goddess Kalyпсо (dancer Hannah Bontrager) following the victory at Troy, his faithful and clever Queen Penelope (dancer Krislyn Willes) at home, waiting seven years for his return. Ballet Fantastique's *Odyssey: The Ballet* then winds through the warrior-hero's encounters with forces both natural and divine, including protectress Athena (dancer Jocelyn Wright), the beautiful, dangerous Siren (dancer Lydia Rakov), and the fearsome Cyclops (dancers Justin Feimster and Lydia Rakov in a custom mask created by Adam Goldthwaite). While Ballet Fantastique's production team has embarked on extensive historical and literary research, and has chosen to closely mirror Homer's original text in their original production, they did want to make one significant change: they wanted to play with the character of Hermes, the messenger-god sent to release Odysseus from Kalyпсо's island.

"We wanted to re-write the character of Hermes as female," says Donna. "Hermes is the actor who helps to re-shape the story's action time and again, who makes Athena's will reality. Many of Homer's female characters are either dangerous seductress or must wait and pine. We love the idea that our Hermes [now "Mercury," danced by principal dancer Leanne Mizzoni] is a female force in *The Odyssey* to be reckoned with."

Ballet Fantastique's *The Odyssey* is also a collaboration featuring celebrated local costume designers, lighting designers and set artists.

Says musician Vance of the group, "Ballet Fantastique is a remarkable organization full of open and wonderfully creative people. It has been an absolute pleasure to work on *The Odyssey*, and I cannot wait to see what lies ahead for this robust group of artists."

Tickets to *The Odyssey: The Ballet* are available in person or by phone through the Hult Center Box Office or online at balletfantastique.org.

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For high-resolution digital images of this production, please email info@balletfantastique.org.