

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

Hannah Bontrager, Ballet Fantastique Executive Director
Mobile phone/direct email (not for publication): 541-206-8977; hbontrager@balletfantastique.org

2016-2017 Season QUICK FACTS

Eugene's contemporary chamber ballet company, Ballet Fantastique, announces their 16-17 Hult Center Resident Company Season: VALIANT. The new 16-17 season will feature all-live music, as well as **four** unique concepts from mother-daughter choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager. Each original performance project—including two world premieres—is filled with the company's signatures: bold, playful concepts, vibrant all-original choreography, evocative cross-disciplinary collaborations. Ballet Fantastique's VALIANT concert season runs October 2016 through May 2017 in the Hult Center's intimate Soreng Theater. Season and single ticket packages are now on sale by calling the Hult Center Box Office at (541) 682-5000 or online at www.hultcenter.org. Senior, youth, student and discounts for groups of 6+ are available. Student outreach performance tickets are also available at www.balletfantastique.org.

FALL 2016: *Pride & Prejudice: A Parisian Jazz Ballet* with LIVE MUSIC by the Gerry Rempel Jazz Syndicate

- Friday Oct. 14 and Saturday Oct. 15 at 7:30 pm; Sunday, Oct. 16 at 2:30 pm (Hult Center)

Take your seat for ballet—and literature—like you've never seen it before. Ballet Fantastique's VALIANT season opens with a playful foray into Jane Austen's classic romance from choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager. And true to Ballet Fantastique form, there's a twist: *Pride & Prejudice: A Parisian Jazz Ballet* brings Austen's spirited women, nosy neighbors, embarrassing relatives, determined bachelors, and smarmy cads to life—in 1920's Paris. Live jazz by Gerry Rempel Jazz Syndicate—including both iconic music from the era and original new works by Rempel—sets the score. "We're big Jane Austen fans," confesses Hannah, "...and we always have been. When we first started asking ourselves if we could move *Pride & Prejudice* to Roaring 20's Paris, I actually emailed two of my favorite former UO English Literature professors to talk it through with them," says Hannah. "We wanted to make sure that we could pull this ambitious idea off—while still maintaining the integrity of Austen's themes." The move is ambitious indeed, but University of Oregon professors Liz Bohls and Diane Dugaw agreed—it could work. After all, Austen's novel expresses a search for self in the midst of shifting societal expectations, and the 20's were a particularly fascinating time, especially for women: as jazz music roared, the flapper redefined modern womanhood.

Ballet Fantastique's telling: Three traditional, upper-class Brits stumble into the Bennette girls' avant-garde Parisian jazz cabaret in a smoky back alley in Montmartre—Darcy, Bingley, and Bingley's haughty sister, Caroline. There, at the "Moulin Bleu" jazz cabaret, Austen's story unfolds to rollicking retro live French jazz, as the fiery (now-French) Elizabeth Bennette ("Bennet," in Austen's original, of course) and her four sisters meet and mingle with the single, rich, and proud tourists. "This is my dream role," says Ashley Bontrager, who dances the role of Lizzie Bennette. "Lizzie is one of my favorite heroines because she embodies it all—the perfect balance of wit, charm, and beauty to captivate almost everyone she encounters. While following her heart and going against society and her mother's wishes, it all turns out well in the end, and her story is about a woman who always follows her heart, and ultimately earns the respect and love of a handsome, intelligent man with a very rich inheritance! It's a fairy tale, really." On the choreographic aesthetic, Donna remarks, "I'm emphasizing rhythms and asking the dancers to move with fiercely detailed, quick musicality and detailed arm and hand movements to evoke the style of the period. We're using irregular and asymmetrical formations and patterns to show how the era was challenging the traditional. The dancers are telling me that they're loving moving so fast." Rempel, director of the Jazz Syndicate, performs with and composes for contemporary jazz and blues ensembles throughout the Northwest, and recently toured China playing with the University of Oregon Gospel Choir. On creating and arranging

music for the ballet premiere, he says, "Much of the material has been worked up from scratch, and yes, that has been a lot of work," says Rempel. "But it's a wonderful opportunity to collaborate with Ballet Fantastique. The dynamism of the ballet working with the live music ensembles is energizing for the arts in our area and a different animal for us. It's fun." Singer Meyer adds: "Having grown up in a French culture, it is especially thrilling to be able to share my love of French music with Ballet Fantastique and its audience." Be prepared for a playful battle between pride and passion in what Ballet Fantastique does best: all-original choreography, live music, and a daring twist on a classic story in *Pride & Prejudice: A Parisian Jazz Ballet*.

**HOLIDAY 2016: The Book of Esther: A Rock Gospel Ballet
with LIVE MUSIC Andiel Brown + UO Gospel Singers**

- Friday Dec. 9 and Saturday Dec. 10 at 7:30 pm, Sunday Dec. 11 at 2:30 pm (Hult Center)

Continuing Ballet Fantastique's VALIANT season is a revival of one of our most highly-acclaimed shows: *The Book of Esther: A Rock Gospel Ballet!* The original work is a collaboration between Ballet Fantastique choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager and the multi-year national award-winning UO Gospel Singers, under the artistic direction of Andiel Brown. "In many ways, this project is a dream finally realized," says Ballet Fantastique Artistic Director Donna Marisa Bontrager. "I've always been drawn to this story and wanted to tell it through dance...and I love this music!" And of this music that will set the backdrop for the Bontragers' new choreography, UO Gospel Singers Artistic Director Andiel Brown says, "The best way to describe the music we'll be singing in *The Book of Esther* is eclectic, uplifting, and inspirational." In addition to leading the choir on stage, Brown will also represent the character of Mordecai, Esther's guardian and a bold, principled leader of the Hebrew people, Godfearing and resolute in the face of impending disaster. Says Brown, "I love the creative process. Just seeing the dancers work out the choreography to the song we will be singing is so inspiring. People should be excited to see this marriage of gospel music, story, and ballet as it has never been done before." Brown promises to have the audience singing along by the ballet's finale. To supplement the choir pieces, the Bontragers have also commissioned Eugene-based composer and jazz/rock guitarist Gerry Rempel to create two original contemporary Persian "rock" instrumental pieces for the ballet premiere. Of the project, Rempel says, "What I find intriguing is the strength and courage of Esther to do what she believes is right even though she is afraid. This is one of the few times in the Bible that a woman is the central subject throughout. It is a wonderful opportunity working with Ballet Fantastique. I love the risks entailed working with a diversity of live music. The presentation seems more alive because of it. I also love the challenge of composing for different settings and this was a great opportunity." Choreographically, Donna and Hannah are fusing and abstracting diverse dance styles as a springboard for the story's dramatic themes, showcasing the artistry, versatility, and dramatic range of their company's critically acclaimed artists. Specifically, they are drawing inspiration from Donna's prior work in Jerusalem with the Feast of the Tabernacles. "The holiday of Purim is the telling of the Esther story and I have always loved it. The story of her wisdom, bravery, and courage is one to be admired." says Donna.

**WORLD PREMIERE: Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
with LIVE MUSIC Oregon Mozart Players feat. double-bass soloist DaXun Zhang**

- Performance for local schoolchildren: Thursday, March 2 at 10 am (Hult Center)
- Friday, March 3 and Saturday, March 4 at 7:30 pm; Sunday March 5 at 2:30 pm (Hult Center)

BFan presents its most audacious work yet, bringing the grand scope and flair of a *wuxia* classic to thrilling life. Known for their finesse at pulling off unexpected fusions of ballet with a multitude of other art and dance forms, Ballet Fantastique choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager were thrilled at the idea of creating a martial-arts infused ballet. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was especially alluring to the Bontragers on account of its strong female protagonists, unusual in kung-fu films but a staple in Ballet Fantastique productions. The story centers around Jen, a young aristocratic woman leading a double life as a Wudan (martial arts) fighter under the mentorship of her governess/teacher, Jade Fox. Jen represents the unrestrained fiery passion of youth, which has the potential to fuel her to greatness or to ruin, depending on whether she follows the tutelage of the evil Jade Fox or the just Lu Mu Bai and Shu Yu Lien, who attempt to teach her the virtues of self-discipline and control, qualities that seasoned ballerinas must also master. "A sword with mystical powers, a couple dashes of romance, and gravity-defying choreography? Of course this story was a natural fit for BFan!" laughs executive director Hannah Bontrager.

Ballet Fantastique is thrilled to be collaborating with world-renowned cellist soloist DaXun Zhang (described as "a champion" of the instrument by the *Washington Post*), as well as the esteemed Oregon Mozart Players (under the artistic direction of Kelly Kuo) for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, who will be playing Tan Dun's award-winning film score live during the performances. This world

premiere project is generously supported by the Nils and Jules B. Hult Endowment Fund of the Arts Foundation of Western Oregon Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation.

WORLD PREMIERE: Aladdin

with LIVE MUSIC Satin Love Orchestra

- Performance for local schoolchildren: Thursday, May 11, 10 am (Hult Center)
- Friday, May 12 and Saturday, May 13 at 7:30 pm; Sunday May 14 at 2:30 pm (Mother's Day Weekend; Hult Center).

Closing the 2016-17 VALIANT Season comes Ballet Fantastique's annual Mother's Day weekend ballet premiere. This year features perhaps Ballet Fantastique's most ambitious project yet: A raucous re-imagining of the timeless adventure of "Aladdin"—but set in the 70s and 80s to the music of Queen—to be arranged and performed live by Satin Love Orchestra. "We want to take the classic rags-to-riches story and re-envision it as an 'anarchic anachronism,' of sorts," says BFan Artistic Director and Choreographer-Producer Donna Marisa Bontrager. "We're fusing flashy, playful choreography with the sheer opulence of Queen's music to create what we know will be BFan's next new wildly unforgettable contemporary ballet premiere." This classic rags-to-riches story now has a twist: Think the Genie dancing to "Don't Stop Me Now" in the cave of wonders, the classic "Bohemian Rhapsody" serving as a theme for our "poor boy," and the fiercely independent Princess will be celebrated with "Killer Queen." Bravery, finding courage within one's self to be honest and just, and the idea that people can rise above one's social status and achieve great things when presented with the opportunity are important themes in the *Aladdin* story, which of course features a very different type of hero than the traditional "Knight in Shining Armor"; Aladdin is quick-witted and intelligent and it's his cleverness that gets him out of trouble—not a fist or a sword. Indeed, these themes go hand in hand with *rebellion* as the biggest major player in the story's plot. In the original tale, *Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp*, rebellion against the status quo, and even the ruling law of the land, is often rewarded with happiness—Aladdin refuses to obey his "uncle," (really the wicked magician) by not giving him the lamp, and after gaining the lamp he uses magic and goes against the Sultan's decree of who shall marry the princess (currently the corrupt Vizier's son) and thus gains a bride. Even the princess herself demonstrates her fiery personality, as she helps Aladdin deceive her kidnapper, the magician Mustapha. "Who better to voice all of this rule-breaking than Queen, one of the leading rebel bands of the 1970s?" laughs Hannah. The world premiere *Aladdin* project is generously supported by the Nils and Jules B. Hult Endowment Fund of the Arts Foundation of Western Oregon Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation.

About Ballet Fantastique

Founded in 2000 in downtown Eugene, Ballet Fantastique is great stories, mischievous innovation, all live music—and bold, visionary new dance theater. Under the direction of mother-daughter Producer-Choreographer team Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager, Ballet Fantastique (BFan) creates and premieres genre-defying all original contemporary ballets. BFan's inimitable new works include *Cinderella* as a rock opera ballet set to 1960's billboard hits, a Wild West spin on Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, the first-ever authorized ballet version of *Zorro*® with the LA-based band Incendio and virtuoso violinist-composer Kim Angelis, and the ancient epic of *The Odyssey* accompanied by the live looping electric violin of Cullen Vance (BFan marked Cullen's first-ever performance at the Hult; he now performs regularly with such groups as Oregon Bach Festival). Ballet Fantastique has forged new cross-disciplinary collaborations with sculptors, choirs, opera and soloist vocalists, symphony and chamber orchestras, literary and visual artists, actors, break dancers, circus artists, and composers. In 2014, Ballet Fantastique proudly became the first new Resident Company at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts in over a decade. BFan has been heralded "a bold, cross-disciplinary dance company" (*Eugene Weekly*) "imaginative geniuses" (*Portland Monthly Magazine*), "not your grandmother's Swan Lake" (*Register-Guard*), and "a company to watch" (*Eugene Magazine*). The new 16-17 season marks BFan's 7th full concert season of all-original contemporary ballet at the Hult Center.

Meet BFan's New Dancers 2016-2017

Cari Koepelin Carolin Koepplin began her training at the Idaho Falls School of Ballet, under director Deborah Bean and Mariko Kim-Downs. As a member of the Idaho Falls based Ballo Capesso performing ensemble, she performed "The Swan" in *Carnival of The Animals*, and the Dragonfly in *Bugs and Ballet*, among others for the community and for local students as part of outreach programs. Her dance education continued at the prestigious University of Utah Department of Ballet, where Cari earned a B.F.A in Ballet *cum laude* with a dual emphasis in Performance and Teaching. At the University of Utah, Ms. Koepplin performed extensively with Utah Ballet under the directorship of Regina Zarhina and Jay Kim. In addition to making her mark in numerous ballet Showcases and Ballet Ensemble performances, Carolin danced featured roles in *La Vivandiere*, "Four Little Swans" in *Swan Lake*, "Russian" in *The Nutcracker*, and in premieres by Professor Maureen Laird, Eldon Johnson, and Dr. Jung Sik Roh. Ms. Koepplin was also a member of the Character Dance Ensemble, and was featured in an excerpt from *La Fille Mal Gardee* on tour to San

Jose, Costa Rica. Since graduation, Ms. Koeplin spent two seasons with Central West Ballet, where she quickly advanced to soloist. Carolin's favorite roles include Moyne in *Giselle*, Jewel Doll, Spanish Coffee Lead, Chinese Tea Lead, and Waltz of the Flowers Pas de Deux in *The Nutcracker*, Eva in Rene Daveluy's premiere of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, "the Chick" in *O! MacDonald* and "Sway" for *Rat Pack in Revue*. She has also performed George Balanchine's *Serenade* as a guest with Ballet Idaho. Cari is thrilled to be joining Ballet Fantastique.

Natanael Monteiro Natanael originally hails from Rio de Janeiro, where he was a principal dancer at Companhia de Ballet do Rio de Janeiro from 2013-2014, and a soloist with Casa da Rua do Amor from 2010-2014. Natanael won multiple bronze and silver medals at the international FESTINCOAA, a leading dance festival and competition in South America. He holds a graduation certificate from both Centro de Arte e Dança, where he was a full scholarship student, and Miami City Ballet School's Pre-Professional Program, where he was also a full scholarship student. Natanael's performance experience includes soloist and principal roles at Companhia de Ballet do Rio de Janeiro and Centro de Arte e Dança in a range of classical and contemporary works, from *Don Quixote* and *Sleeping Beauty* to *Elements*, and ensemble and demi-soloist roles with Miami City Ballet, including *Paquita*, *Giselle*, *Coppelia*, and *Who Cares?* and *Miami Heat*. Natanael is excited to be joining Ballet Fantastique because of its commitment to new work.

Gustavo Ramirez Gustavo joins Ballet Fantastique from his work as a soloist with Gelsey Kirkland Ballet in New York. Gustavo originally began his training in Cali, Colombia at the prestigious Colombian Institute for Classical Ballet (Incolballet). During his eight years at this prestigious school, Gustavo's studies included extensive work in ballet, modern, folklore and character dance. He obtained dance degrees from ballet-centered secondary and higher-level institutions, where he was educated by ballet masters Gloria Castro, Helena Cala, Maria del Carmen Hechavarria, and Rolando Candia as well as teachers from the National Ballet of Cuba. At the age of 17, Gustavo joined the company of Instituto Colombiano de Ballet Clasico (Incolballet), under ballet masters Gaetano Petrosinio, Flávio Salazar, and Juan Carlos Peñuela. He then moved to New York to complete his ballet training at the Gelsey Kirkland Academy (GKA) as a full scholarship student; he also holds scholarships to international summer programs, including American Academy of Ballet and Nashville Ballet. After graduating from GKA, Gustavo danced soloist and principal roles in the Gelsey Kirkland Ballet, including *Faust*, *Paquita*, *Wedding Procession*, *Nutcracker*, and *Les Sylphides*. Gustavo also has experience as a supernumerary with both American Ballet Theatre at the Metropolitan Opera House and with Mikhailovsky Ballet Theater at the David H. Koch Theater. Gustavo looks forward to his first season with Ballet Fantastique.

OPEN BARRE: Also this season, Open Barre, Ballet Fantastique's unique Wednesday night open rehearsal series at the City Center for Dance (960 Oak, downtown Eugene), is back. Join the Ballet Fantastique dancers, choreographers, and musicians on selected Wednesdays throughout the season for a behind-the-scenes open rehearsal preview of new performance premieres in progress, plus tastings of wine from local artisan winemaker William Rose Wines, and delightful refreshments from Fraga Farmstead Creamery and Sundance Natural Foods.

- **Pride & Prejudice Open Barre:** Wednesday, Oct. 5 from 6:30-8 pm
- **Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon Open Barre:** Wednesday, Feb. 22 from 6:30-8 pm
- **Aladdin Open Barre:** Wednesday, May 3 from 6:30-8 pm