

# BALLET *Fantastique*

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## Ballet Fantastique Presents *Tour de Suites*

Featuring original choreography by Artistic Director Donna Marisa Bontrager  
in collaboration with Ballet Fantastique dancers

EUGENE, ORE—Ballet Fantastique is prepared to dazzle Hult Center audiences again with their latest mixed repertory program, *Tour de Suites* on May 18 at 2 pm.

The program, which includes a variety of seminal ballet favorites in tandem with innovative new choreography, showcases the versatility and artistry of Eugene's premiere chamber ballet ensemble.

Tickets are available now through the Hult Center Box Office and may be purchased online at [www.hultcenter.org](http://www.hultcenter.org) or by phone at (541)682-5000.

### THE PROGRAM

*Tour de Suites* engages the audience through a mix of beloved ballet suites and exciting new pieces. French composer Maurice Ravel's enchanting *Daphnis and Chloe* inspired contemporary ballet choreography including asymmetrical formations and a style evocative of the neoclassical era. "It was so easy to create movement to Ravel's exquisite music," explains dancer Nicola Thieme. "This piece just has so much character and such a strong personality. It told us what to dance. And it feels natural to dance it."

Also featured in the program are technically demanding variations and pas de deux from *Paquita* and *Le Corsaire*. "It's an exciting challenge to perform the real thing," says dancer Hannah Bontrager, who will be performing the *Le Corsaire* pas de deux with Alonzo Moore. "You know that you're performing repertoire that is the same across ocean and generations of professional

dancers—and you have to rise to the expectation, even as you make it your own." Russian classics are especially close to the heart of the Russian Kirov/Bolshoi-rooted academy and company; other Russian works appearing in the *Tour de Suites* include the delightful and charming Russian classic *The Fairy Doll*. Here, clowns compete for the attention of pink-tutu clad dolls and cartwheels meet pirouettes. Young artists from Ballet Fantastique's academy join company dancers on stage.

The show will finish with the most anticipated part of the program: the premiere of original choreography to film composer Henry Mancini's jazzy, brassy *Breakfast at Tiffany's* score. The company dancers pull out all the stops to tackle Mancini's sleek 1950's mambos with pizzazz. "This is our favorite piece to dance," enthuses dancer Julia Hakes. "It's also challenging—you're expressing the liveliness of the music, but you have to pace yourself with the technically challenging choreography."

#### UNIQUE APPROACH TO CHOREOGRAPHY

Many of the pieces in *Tour de Suites* were created through a unique approach to ballet choreography: Artistic Director Donna Marisa Bontrager pursued active collaboration with the five Ballet Fantastique company dancers to develop complex, richly layered compositions while giving dancers an opportunity for professional choreographic experience. The results are dynamic, textured pieces in which dancers share a personal investment.

"I've always had a passion for choreography, but it usually had to be in the studio late at night or in my kitchen!" says Nicola Thieme, who danced with State Street Ballet in CA before joining Ballet Fantastique as a company dancer. "At Ballet Fantastique this collaborative process means that we're working together to create something beautiful, my ideas make a difference, and I really feel that we're making some amazing, innovative pieces with this unique process."

"It's definitely more participatory. We perform the classics, yes, but when we choreograph together, we also get our hands dirty with the nuts and bolts of where to repeat a phrase, what feels right with the music, where the musicians are choosing to accent, and if we want to complement that or provide counterpoint..." adds company dancer Alonzo Moore. Hannah jumps in: "It's fun, it's meaningful, and I think it makes a more nuanced, interesting and richly-layered piece."

*Tour de Suites* contains encore performances of recent work composed in this style that premiered with the Oregon Mozart Players ("Four Novelettes") and at the Eugene Symphony's Discovering Daphnis Festival ("Daybreak"), in addition to new northwest premieres.

## PRODUCTION BACKGROUND

Artistic Director Donna Marisa Bontrager and her daughter and co-director, Hannah Bontrager, have been gearing up for a mixed-repertory program all year. “This concert is a way to give back to our dancers and our growing audience base through stellar, rousing, *fun* choreography. It’s truly a ‘tour’ of some delightful suites of dances that will show off our dancers’ bright performance style,” says Donna.

The performance will be followed by a special reception in the Jacobs Gallery (additional ticket required; contact Ballet Fantastique for more information: 541-342-4611 or [info@balletfantastique.org](mailto:info@balletfantastique.org)). Pacific Northwest Publishing has stepped forward by subsidizing 100 free tickets for children at local schools Ballet Fantastique dancers are working with this spring, so the Bontragers suspect that the remaining tickets will disappear quickly.

## BALLET FANTASTIQUE

Ballet Fantastique is Eugene’s new—and as yet, only—chamber ballet company. With a repertoire classically rooted in the Russian Vaganova style of the Bolshoi and Kirov, dancers present ballet favorites and new work that critics have praised for its passion, clarity, and “bright” virtuosity.

Comprised of five young professional dancers, and co-directed by mother-daughter team Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager, the company regularly presents professional solo concerts and collaborations with such groups as Eugene Symphony, the Oregon Mozart Players, the Slavic Festival, and the Umpqua Dance Festival. This summer, they are preparing for a first-time guest performance tour in southern Oregon for Ballet Rogue’s “Ballet in the Park” performance series. Recent performances (including “Tchaikovsky to Tango” with the Trio Voronezh) earned standing ovations to near-sold out Hult audiences.

Ballet Fantastique is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to keep classical ballet vibrantly alive in our city through unique, community-centered, world-class training, educational, and performance experiences for young artists, audiences, and professionals.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/QUICK FACTS

The performance is Sunday, May 18 at 2pm. Tickets are \$14-25 for reserved seating; \$8 for students. Group Discount is \$5 off \$14-25 tickets for groups of five or more (Hult Center Box Office sales only; not available for online ticket purchases).

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For more information visit the Ballet Fantastique website at  
[www.balletfantastique.com](http://www.balletfantastique.com)

To request images of Ballet Fantastique, please contact Hannah Bontrager at  
[Balletfantastique@gmail.com](mailto:Balletfantastique@gmail.com)

## **Ballet Fantastique in the Media**

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- "Ballet Fantastique transports fans" – *Register Guard*
- "Impressive and spectacular!" – *Register Guard*
- "Looks for new rhythm that hovers between the traditionally lyrical...even as they lovingly emulate the Kirov's artistry." – *Eugene Weekly*
- "Ballet With A Twist" – Feature article written by Bob Keefer, *The Register Guard*, Arts section. Sunday, October 14, 2007.