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## Mediterranean-themed gala to benefit Ballet Fantastique's compelling new dance education project



Eugene (September 10, 2006) — On Saturday, September 23, commencing at 5 p.m., Territorial Winery's eclectic tasting room at 907 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue in Eugene will shimmer with the movement, rhythm and tastes of Tuscany. Guests attending the benefit gala for Ballet Fantastique's EXPERIENCE DANCE! Project will revel in sumptuous Mediterranean cuisine by Café Soriah, guided tastings of fine local wine, and the sensuous strums of classical guitar by Eugene musician Dave Sherry. A silent auction will offer themed vacation and luxury baskets.

The evening's crowning touch will be concert preview performances by Ballet Fantastique's new chamber ballet company, co-directed by mother-daughter team Donna and Hannah Bontrager.

"We chose Territorial Winery because what they do resonates with our own vision," said Hannah Bontrager, the younger Bontrager and Executive Director of Ballet Fantastique. "They're truly revitalizing our city through art because they've proven that locally-grown grapes can produce world-class wine. Ballet Fantastique believes that local dancers can produce world-class performance—if we give them the chance. We're that chance."

All proceeds from "An Evening in Tuscany" will benefit the critically acclaimed EXPERIENCE DANCE! Project, a unique and ambitious effort to bring high-caliber classical ballet in innovative formats to non-traditional audiences, and scholarship support to dedicated young dancers.

The Project premiered last year, when dancers from the non-profit company's academy and chamber performance ensemble presented interactive school assemblies to nearly 1,000 children at six Eugene-Springfield elementary and middle schools. These free

performances were accompanied by engaging lectures and interactive workshops. Ballet Fantastique also gave out 500 complimentary tickets to interested students to see a full performance.

Ballet Fantastique's vision is to create arts experiences that are not only inspiring and innovative, but also accessible to young people of all backgrounds and means. The company is committed to asserting the presence of high-caliber art in Eugene through vibrant professional concerts in classical dance and collaborations with world-class organizations such as the Eugene Symphony (Tchaikovsky Festival, 2005). The company's elite ensemble of soloists was recently lauded by the Register-Guard as "impressive and spectacular!"

To learn more about this event visit [http://balletfantastique.org/invest/special\\_events.htm](http://balletfantastique.org/invest/special_events.htm)  
Tickets for "An Evening in Tuscany" are available at the door or by advance online reservation at [www.balletfantastique.org](http://www.balletfantastique.org).

*Ticket prices: \$30/person (\$35 at the door); \$50/couple (\$60 at the door); \$250 "Friends of the Ballet" table for six.*