

# BALLET *Fantastique*

*Donna Marisa Bontrager, Artistic Director*

**CONTACT: HANNAH J. BONTRAGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

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## Quick Facts

**WHAT: FAIRYTALE FAVORITES**

Music from favorite ballet composers, including Tchaikovsky  
Choreography based on the original, as performed by the Kirov Ballet

*With **NEW** original choreography by Donna Marisa Bontrager and  
Hannah Bontrager-Gwartney*

**ABOUT: FAIRYTALE FAVORITES**

Don't miss full parade of fairytale characters from Little Red Riding Hood to the Jewel Fairies from Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*. Performers from the Ballet Fantastique Academy are joined by professional dancers in the critically-acclaimed Ballet Fantastique Chamber Company for a concert that promises to enchant at every pirouette.

**WHEN:** Saturday, June 3 @ 2 pm

**WHERE:** Jaqua Concert Hall, the Shedd Institute for the Arts

*FAIRYTALE FAVORITES will be the **FIRST** dance concert at the Shedd!*

**TICKETS:** Tickets (\$12 general admission; \$8 children under 12) are available at the Ballet Fantastique studio (60 E. 10<sup>th</sup>) or at the door.

*BALLET FANTASTIQUE has also given away over 500 **FREE** tickets to youth in area public schools, as part of their critically-acclaimed **EXPERIENCE DANCE! PROJECT**, made possible by a generous grant from Lane Arts Council.*



## Ballet Fantastique presents *Fairytale Favorites*, the first dance concert at the Shedd, and gives away over 500 free performance tickets to local youth

Eugene's own Ballet Fantastique will present the first dance concert at the Shedd Institute for the Arts on June 3. *Fairytale Favorites* will include a full parade of sparkling fairytale characters, from Little Red Riding Hood to the Jewel Fairies from Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*, and both professional and student dancers.

Being actively involved in building a strong arts presence in downtown Eugene has been an integral part of the organization's vision since it first opened its doors on the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and Oak just over five years ago. Since then, it has seen the arrival of local arts hotspots such as the Shedd and the MacDonald Theater.

Says Artistic Director Donna Bontrager: "We chose to open our academy downtown because it's very important to us to be part of creating something unique and happening in our city center. It's been fulfilling and exhilarating to see new theaters and arts centers opening around us—and we want to continue to find new ways to forge partnerships with these groups, as our city continues to grow a strong arts presence around us."

Hannah, the younger Bontrager and co-director of Ballet Fantastique, adds: "Breaking in the Shedd stage for dance has been a goal for us ever since it opened! Making high-caliber, entertaining ballet performance available in new venues is one of the very best ways to build and inspire new audiences for the arts. What's more, we feel ideally suited for the Shedd, which has a reputation for offering community-centered, world-class concerts: that's just what we strive to do, as well."

*Fairytale Favorites*, which includes a colorful *mélange* of variations from well-known ballets, is a partner-component of Ballet Fantastique's EXPERIENCE DANCE! PROJECT, funded by a grant from Lane Arts Council. As part of this project, dancers from the academy and chamber performance ensemble are currently presenting a series of interactive school assemblies for just under a thousand kids in county elementary and middle schools, including schools in more rural districts that see less arts performance.

As part of the project, Ms. Bontrager's dancers present classical ballet variations and teach a mini ballet class, keying kids into the athletic challenges of the art form with interactive –

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activities such as a “Jumping Contest.” Children handle real pointe shoes and tutus and learn what to look for in a dance performance—and then, they’re invited to experience dance performance in the theater with a free ticket voucher to *Fairytale Favorites*.

“We can see from their faces that we’re giving the students a new kind of ownership of dance—the kind that will make them want to come to the theater again and again as adults—and it’s so rewarding,” says Hannah, the younger Bontrager, herself a graduate of the Ballet Fantastique training program, and now Executive Director of the organization.

A parent who was present at a recent performance is similarly effusive: “Ballet Fantastique brings a glowing atmosphere of discovery to even an elementary school cafeteria. The opportunity to experience interactive, high-caliber art such as is brought by the EXPERIENCE DANCE! PROJECT is invaluable to these children’s educations—and it’s so exciting to know that there’s an academy in town that knows it and is doing something about it,” said Margie Van Dorn, parent of a second-grader at Springfield’s Mount Vernon Elementary.

The company hopes to translate this “glowing atmosphere of discovery” to the Shedd stage, and to grow a new generation of arts-appreciators in the process.

## About the Organization

Directed by mother-daughter team Donna and Hannah Bontrager, Ballet Fantastique has been dreaming—and dancing—up a refreshing whirlwind in the ballet community for the past five years. From a free monthly demonstration series in their studio, to choreographing ballet to opera music and awarding “Rising Star” scholarships to aspiring and underprivileged young dancers, Ballet Fantastique isn’t afraid to fuse their fierce classical vocabulary with a rainbow of new ideas.

The academy isn’t only passionate about educating the city—Ballet Fantastique also passionate about educating its students. And accordingly, from its youngest students (age 4) to these professional dancers, Ballet Fantastique has chosen to limit their classes to as few as five dancers each to ensure a semi-private atmosphere conducive to the professional coaching that is so integral to their mission. Dancers ages nine through professional are guided through every detail of the internationally recognized Vaganova training method, the same syllabus that has trained such ballet legends as Mikhail Baryshnikov and Anna Pavlova.

All of this top-notch training is paying off: the company turned the heads of critics and arts appreciators last October, when they produced a near sold-out Hult Center concert with collaborators Traduza Dance Company and Project Tango.

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The performance, an innovative “mosaic” of Spanish-inspired ballet and Brazilian modern dance, earned reviews of “impressive and spectacular.” All such praise aside, Bontrager notes that dance critic Rachael Carnes’s (*Eugene Weekly*) likening of young Ballet Fantastique performers to the legendary Kirov Ballet Company was her proudest moment.

After having just received word of its new non-profit status (which gave the organization prestige as Lane County’s first non-profit ballet academy in a growing roster of new schools), the newest wing of Ballet Fantastique is another first for the city: the area’s only professional dancer development program is dedicated to giving local talent incentives to remain active artists in the area through free or sliding-fee weekly master classes and performance and choreographic opportunities.

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Please visit [www.balletfantastique.org](http://www.balletfantastique.org) for more information and press materials.

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