



BALLET
FANTASTIQUE

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QUICK FACTS:

- **WHAT:** Mother's Day Weekend world premiere of Ballet Fantastique's new *Robin Hood & Maid Marian @ Hult Center*
- **PRODUCERS:** All-original choreography by Ballet Fantastique founding resident choreographer-producers **Donna Marisa Bontrager & Hannah Bontrager** with guest *Lord of the Rings* fight choreographer **Michelle Ladd Williams**
- **LIVE MUSIC:** Composer **Liza Carbé** for Ballet Fantastique with JP Durand and LIVE MUSIC by **Nottingham**
- **4 WORLD PREMIERE PERFORMANCES:** Hult Center, Thurs. May 11—Sat. May 13 @7:30 pm; Sun. May 14 (Mother's Day) @2:30 pm
- **TICKETS:** Tickets \$22–76 (students/youth \$15–65), with \$5 off regularly priced tickets for groups of 5+
On sale now through the Hult Center Box Office: 541-682-5000 or hultcenter.org

Livestream tickets are also available at balletfantastique.org/robin

Ballet Fantastique presents Robin Hood & Maid Marian
—where irresistible dance theater meets great personality and good triumphs all
with LIVE MUSIC by Nottingham and new score for BFan by Liza Carbé

EUGENE, OREGON—Ballet Fantastique presents its all-original *Robin Hood & Maid Marian*—a heroic and daring reimagining of the timeless tale of Robin Hood in a world where good triumphs over evil and heroes prevail.

Choreographers Donna Marisa Bontrager and Hannah Bontrager bring Ballet Fantastique's signature storytelling and wit to this thrilling adventure, with iconic folklore fused with powerful new music, an unstoppable Robin Hood, and a brave Maid Marian brought to life.

This exciting new ballet features a groundbreaking all-female creative team, including LA composer Liza Carbé, *Lord of the Rings* fight choreographer Michelle Ladd Williams (in residence from LA), set designer-builder Debra Peña, and BFan's own Donna and Hannah.

At the forefront of this production is a diverse and talented artistic cast on stage, led by guest artist Fredrick Davis in the iconic role of Robin Hood. Davis, a former principal dancer with Dance Theatre of Harlem, is the first Black/Native American to portray Robin Hood in history, and he is thrilled to bring this groundbreaking role to life. "It's official! I will dance as the iconic legendary role Robin Hood in BFan's *Robin Hood & Maid Marian*," Davis says. "It [is] a true honor to be first Black/Native American Robin Hood in history in the

making....thank you BFan for making this vision a reality!!! It will be inspiring for younger boys of color to see a Robin Hood in their own image!"

The production has earned accolades from Dance Data Project, which tracks gender representation in the world of dance. BFan's *Robin Hood & Maid Marian* features female leading voices in every creative position, from composer to fight choreographer to set designer-builder. "Ballet Fantastique is thrilled to be creating an original work featuring such a talented and diverse creative team," says Donna Marisa Bontrager, artistic director of Ballet Fantastique. "We are excited to bring this new production to life, and to showcase the talents of our incredible dancers and collaborators."

For this world premiere, Ballet Fantastique has commissioned its first-ever full-length musical score with longtime BFan collaborators Liza Carbé and JP Durand. This LA-based team has written music for *Entertainment Tonight* as well as Paramount movies and TV. Liza's brand-new compositions and arrangements for Ballet Fantastique's *Robin Hood & Maid Marian* premiere have been uniquely written to match Donna and Hannah's intricate new choreography and the story libretto crafted by BFan's creative team. The score heightens the story's drama and brings these heroic characters to life!

"People have to come see this new project!" says Liza. "What I love most about BFan is their commitment, which is a little frightening, honestly. It's brave and crazy and complicated to do what they do, pushing the boundaries of dance with unique and uncompromising visions for choreography, costumes, and storyline. They are so hands-on. Working with them so intimately on writing new music for a new production has pushed me as an artist and composer. The score is very explosive and densely orchestrated in a novel way, pulling from medieval and modern influences that unexpectedly call on genres and approaches that I loved, but have not deeply explored until now."

Liza continues, "I really love working with this team—it's so exciting to work in a joint creative process with them. Additionally, because of the ancient nature of the music, it was important to call in the right people to play certain period instruments. As fate would have it, two of my dear friends and incredible musicians live near Eugene and are now part of the project: Lisa Lynne (harp, cittern, percussion) and Aryeh Frankfurter (nyckelharpa, fiddle, violin, cello). Eliot Grasso (flutes, violin), a great musician and Eugene resident who frequently performs with the ballet will also be part of the live music for the show."

"Also, this production features a tremendous group of women in charge," adds Liza. "Mother and daughter producer/choreographers Donna and Hannah Bontrager have put together a fantastic team that includes Michelle Ladd Williams (fight choreographer), Debra Peña (set designer/builder), Allison Ditson (costume designer), Mitra Gruwell (props and headpiece maker), Deborah and Genevieve Speer (libretto support team) and Dr. Barbara Mossberg (Fulbright specialist/narration writer). It's awe-inspiring to be part of this illustrious group of ladies."

Lord of the Rings Guest Fight Choreographer Michelle Ladd Williams

To bring the story of Robin Hood to life, Ballet Fantastique is collaborating with Hollywood fight choreographer, Michelle Ladd, who led combat teams for major film projects such as *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Lord of the Rings*. Michelle spent the first week in April in Eugene, working collaboratively with Donna and Hannah and the BFan artists to set all the major fight scenes within this performance, including scenes like *Fight at the Banquet* and *Fight at the Tavern*. The *Robin Hood* collaboration represents Ladd's first-ever project for a ballet company!

"I am absolutely thrilled to be here working with Ballet Fantastique," says Michelle. "Since Hannah reached out to me in 2019 I have been an avid follower of BFan. This ballet company is ground-breaking and so very exciting! I am completely on board with their product and have become one of their biggest fans. Reconnecting with my first love of ballet is a primary aspect I am looking forward to but also the challenge of allowing myself the freedom of choreographing stylized combat. So often my work has to look aggressive and brutal. But here, the dancers are able to give the impression of violence while making the movements so graceful! The intention of the action will tell the story rather than the smoke and mirrors of traditional staged combat. What a joy to work on this production!"

Creative team

Also, joining the creative team for the world premiere are Allison Ditson as Lead Costume Designer, Mitra Gruwell as Props & Headpiece Maker, Deborah and Genevieve Speer as Libretto Support Team, and Dr. Barbara Mossberg, Fulbright Specialist, as Narration Writer. Many of these women are not only industry leaders in male-dominated worlds, but are also, uniquely, working moms.

Ditson brings her expertise and creativity to the production as the Lead Costume Designer. Her designs will bring the characters to life and add an extra layer of depth to the already intricate choreography.

Gruwell's unique artistic style will be evident in the props and headpieces she creates for the production. Her work will complement the set design and choreography, and add to the overall ambiance of the production.

Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager, the Ballet Fantastique mother-daughter team and founding Producer-Choreographers, continue to lead the way with their passion and dedication to their craft. Their vision and leadership have been essential in bringing this production to fruition.

Another mother-daughter team, Deborah and Genevieve Speer, have spent the last three years working on this project as BFan's Robin Hood historical research and libretto support team, lending their experience and expertise to ensure the production tells a captivating and cohesive story.

Dr. Barbara Mossberg, Fulbright Specialist and PhD, serves as Narration Writer for the production. Her words will provide insight and depth to the story, giving audiences a deeper understanding and appreciation for the characters and their motivations. Guest actor Adam Goldthwaite stars as The Bard/King Richard, weaving throughout the story and guiding the action.

Ballet Fantastique is thrilled to have such a talented and diverse team of collaborators working together to bring this exciting new production to life.

Tickets for *Robin Hood & Maid Marian* (four performances only; expected to sell out!) are on sale now at the Hult Center Box Office and online at hultcenter.org. Don't miss your chance to see this exciting new production, featuring stunning choreography, thrilling fight scenes, and a diverse and groundbreaking cast and creative team.

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