

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

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QUICK FACTS:

- **WHAT:** The Mother's Day Weekend world premiere of Ballet Fantastique's new contemporary ballet, *Cleopatra* with **LIVE music** by Beats Antique, in their first-ever collaboration with a ballet company
- **CONCEPT + CHOREOGRAPHY:** All-original, by choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager
- **EUGENE PERFORMANCES (SORENG THEATER, HULT CENTER):**
Thurs. May 9, 7:30 pm; Fri. May 10, 7:30 pm; Sat. May 11, 7:30 pm; Sun. May 12, 2:30 pm (Mother's Day)
Note: Only limited/balcony seats still remaining for Sat./Sun. performances
- **TICKETS:** Tickets \$40-85 (students/youth \$27-75), with \$5 off regularly priced tickets for groups of five or more.
On sale now through the Hult Center Box Office: 541-682-5000 or www.hultcenter.org

Ballet Fantastique presents Cleopatra—decadent romance, fierce political intrigue and BFan's most boldly extravagant new art in history—with live music from Beats Antique

A fecund carpet, an asp, an empire almost lost to a pair of kohl-rimmed eyes. Cleopatra VII is the last Pharaoh of Egypt: A luminous Hellenistic queen ruling an Egyptian kingdom in a Roman world—juggling personae to shock, awe, love, rule, and endure.

"Cleopatra's historical figure looms large with legend, power, and drama," says Ballet Fantastique Choreographer-Producer Donna Marisa Bontrager. "She's a scholar, a mother, a ruler-goddess, and bold architect-visionary of a unified Egypt. We've been inspired to make a defiant and spellbinding new full-length work of dance theater to tell her story in a new way."

Ballet Fantastique's *Cleopatra* project is set to the Levantine modern electronic sound of blockbuster musicians Beats Antique, playing live at the Hult Center in their first-ever collaboration with a ballet company.

Beats Antique is a US-based experimental world fusion and electronic music group. Formed in 2007 in conjunction with producer Miles Copeland, the group has become noted for their mix of different genres as well as their live shows, which mix samples and heavy percussives with performance art. Beats Antique's inimitable sound is a masterful fusion of modern technology and live instrumentation with elements of brass bands and glitch, string quartets and dubstep.

"This collaboration has been almost two years in the making, and we are profoundly thrilled and honored," says Ballet Fantastique Co-Choreographer-Producer Hannah Bontrager. "I actually flew down to Berkeley to meet Tommy at the Beats Antique studio and to convince him to do this project with us! We absolutely adore the music of Beats Antique and knew that if we could find a way to work with them, we could make an incredible ballet—something that's truly never been done before. We also couldn't have done a world

premiere project of this scale without the generous support of a \$32,500 Hult Endowment grant. It's our largest Hult Endowment grant in Ballet Fantastique's history. We know that this collaboration is nontraditional and are so humbled that the panel believes so passionately in what Ballet Fantastique is doing."

While their live performances feature Tribal Fusion (belly) dancing and performance art, **Cleopatra** represents the first time that Beats Antique has collaborated with a ballet company. "We're re-imagining our music and the performance to create the soundtrack for the storytelling of Ballet Fantastique's world premiere," says Tommy Cappel ("Sidecar Tommy") of Beats Antique. "We have never performed with a ballet company in a performing arts center—a type venue that traditionally is out of our wheelhouse. I'm excited for the challenge, and thus far has been building up to be something beautiful and unique."

"The world of music and art is vast and my inspirations follow suit. I'm inspired by revolutionaries who dig deep to find the sound that works for the song/performance. The collaboration between movement and music is a sacred one that I feel can break down barriers that may divide us," says Cappel.

Donna, Hannah, and BFan librettist-historian Deborah Speer worked with Beats Antique to choose an original score of Beats Antique music for the **Cleopatra** premiere. Several rows of seats are being taken out of the Hult Center's Soreng Theater to accommodate the musician instrument and technology footprint.

About the Story/Creative Process

For the story of their new telling of **Cleopatra**, Ballet Fantastique's Donna and Hannah weave a lavish and intoxicating world filled with dangerous romance and fierce political intrigue: Great rivals from worlds of privilege collide and **Cleopatra** explores themes of war and romance, politics and power, love and jealousy, alliance and misalliance.

"Our creative team has been drenching ourselves in Egyptian and Roman history for the last few months," says Donna. "At the end of the day, we're making a new piece of art that celebrates the intersections of history and legend."

Ballet Fantastique's creative team has drawn from myriad historical and artistic references as the basis for the project.

"And we're also striving to complicate the story everyone knows," continues Hannah. "Yes, Cleopatra VII was a legend—everyone knows her name, knows at least some part of her story. We know that she was brave, she was a commander. She spoke at least nine languages. She was fabulously brilliant, a scholar, a politician. And...she was also a human woman. She risked it all. She may not have had her dream of ruling the world, but she did become immortal in the process of trying. There's so much power in this story, and it's such an honor to tell it."

Quoting Marc Anthony, whom he portrays in the world premiere, Ballet Fantastique principal dancer Gustavo Ramirez says, "In a world where so many speak and don't hear, she is somebody who listens with her mind and hears with her heart."

"I'm excited to play a very infamous person who is often misunderstood," says Ballet Fantastique principal dancer Ashley Bontrager on the role of Cleopatra. "There are a lot of cliches and stereotypes, I am thrilled to show our perspective on the softer, more intelligent sides of her as well. Portraying such a complex character is a challenge that I am eager for."

Original project designs

Ballet Fantastique's sumptuous, culture-crossing epic brings together world premiere designs from a formidable team of artists: Ballet Fantastique Choreographer-Producers Donna and Hannah Bontrager are joined by international (and Oregon-based) costume designers Allison Ditson and Noelle Guetti, headpiece designer Mitra Chester, set designer Kelle DeForrest and Ballet Fantastique set designer/master Mike Ricker, and Ballet Fantastique's resident librettist-historian, Deborah Speer.

"Our goal has been to bring our audience on this journey with us, to set the mood. In our beautifully intimate Soreng Theater, they'll be immersed in this lavish, almost intoxicating world where everything is dangerous romance, fierce political intrigue," says Donna.

About the process

"To create a new ballet, Ballet Fantastique's creative team does a lot of things all at the same time! At the same time as we are researching and writing our libretto, we are deciding on the characters and the narrative arc of each scene," says Hannah on the creative process. "Once we've crafted our story and have decided who's on stage, we work with our creative team to hand-pick songs (usually about 14-20 pieces of music) that will help tell each part of the story. We're also simultaneously working on scenic and costume design plans and choreographing with our incredible team of 17 Ballet Fantastique professional dancers, who bring a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences to telling this story in a new way."

The world premiere of Ballet Fantastique's **Cleopatra** is generously funded in part by presenting sponsor Banner Bank, as well as with a \$32,500 grant from the Hult Endowment.

Tickets are available in person at the Hult Center or online at www.balletfantastique.org.

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For high-resolution images of the production, please email events@balletfantastique.org