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QUICK FACTS:

- **WHAT:** Ballet Fantastique's *Nevermore: Stories of Edgar Allan Poe* at the Hult Center
- **SCORE:** YouTube celebrity composers Peter Gundry and Lucas King, dark classics (Rachminoff, Satie), PLAYED LIVE
- **CONCEPT + CHOREOGRAPHY:** New dance theater by Ballet Fantastique's Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager
- **SPOOKY GUESTS:** Alastair Morley Jaques, Edgar Allan Poe lecturer/impersonator
- **EUGENE HULT CENTER PERFORMANCES:** Thurs Oct 19 at 7pm; Fri Oct 20 and Sat Oct 21 at 7:30pm; Sun, Oct 22 at 2:30pm; Soreng Theater
- **ADDITIONAL PREVIEW EVENTS:**
 - Fri. Oct. 6 — First Friday Art Walk Open Rehearsal, Ballet Fantastique City Center for Dance
 - Sat. Oct. 7–Sun. Oct. 8 — Nevermore Haunted House, Shelton McMurphey Johnson House
 - Fri. Oct. 13 — Eugene Public Library Preview Performance Events
- **HULT SHOW TICKETS:** Tickets \$22-76 (students /youth \$15-64), with \$5 off regularly priced tickets for groups of 6+. On sale now through the Hult Box Office: 541-682-5000 or www.balletfantastique.org/nevermore

The haunting stories of Edgar Allan Poe—in a new, live gothic theatrical experience

Eugene, OR, September 15, 2023 — Ballet Fantastique (BFan) immerses Eugene audiences in the mesmerizing world of Edgar Allan Poe with its *Nevermore: Stories of Edgar Allan Poe*. This grand and enigmatic theatrical experience, inspired by the dark romance and poetry of the Victorian literary genius Edgar Allan Poe (1845-1849), is a spellbinding journey through Poe's most iconic works: "The Raven," "Annabel Lee," "Masque of the Red Death," "Cask of Amontillado," and "Fall of the House of Usher."

This is the Eugene-based company's first Hult Center production since its four Emmy® nominations in May 2023.

"The audience is going to be spellbound by this custom, immersive theatrical experience, transporting them to the worlds of Poe," says Artistic Director and **Nevermore** Choreographer-Producer Donna Marisa Bontrager. "And I say 'worlds' intentionally—Poe creates vivid, haunted spaces that speak to the imagination. We're taking the next step, bringing these worlds vividly alive."

The Hult Center Transforms into a Haunted House

True to Ballet Fantastique's innovative approach, **Nevermore** is ballet like you've never seen before. It seamlessly blends new ballet choreography for BFan's international artists with acrobats, actors, and a spine-tingling live musical accompaniment. Nationally recognized [Alastair Morley Jaques](#), a Poe specialist-impersonator, will guide the audience through each story and poem with selected excerpts from Poe's texts.

The immersive score includes eerie sound effects like howling wind, hushed whispers, creaking doors, and lightning strikes—all presented in a captivating surround sound mix.

"We're turning the Hult Center into a haunted house," remarks Ballet Fantastique and **Nevermore** Co-Choreographer-Producer Hannah Bontrager.

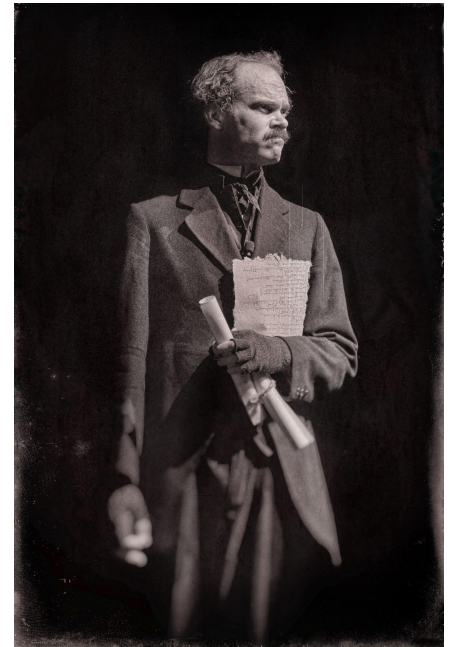
Diverse Cast—Fresh Perspective

Ballet Fantastique's international roster of dancer-actors brings these tales to life in thrilling ways. [Gustavo Ramirez](#) (Cali, Colombia) as the haunted lover in Poe's famed "Annabel Lee" with (his real-life wife) [Ashley Bontrager](#) (Eugene, OR) as Annabel.

[Joshua Webb](#) (London, UK) is the arrogant Prince Prospero fated to die in a doomed ballroom in Poe's "Masque of the Red Death," with [Raymond Silos](#) (Cirque du Soleil, Miami, FL) as the Gargoyle of the Clock. [Preston Andrew Patterson](#) (Atlanta, GA) and [Isabelle Bloodgood](#) (Los Angeles, CA) are cast opposite each other in Poe's "Cask of Amontillado" as Count Montressor and The Contessa. Additionally, in one of her first leading roles since becoming a mother of two, [Hannah Bontrager](#) is back on stage as Madeline Usher, buried alive in Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher." In Poe's "The Raven," Donna and Hannah cast the title character as a female dancer—[Ana Brooks](#) (Salt Lake City, UT).

Women in Poe

"Seventy percent of Artistic Directors in America's leading ballet companies are male, according to the Dance Data Project's [most recent findings](#)," says Hannah, Co-Choreographer-Producer of *Nevermore*. "Among choreographers for new work, the



percentage commissioned from female choreographers drops further.” In our *Nevermore* project, I do believe that this (unique) perspective of being a female maker has informed who is dancing on stage and what they have an opportunity to say with their storytelling and their movement.”

“For example, the female birds and ghosts you always see represented in classical ballet—think *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*—are wispy and victims/victimized. In our version of Poe’s ‘Raven,’ Lenore isn’t just a memory—she’s part of the nightmare. She does her own haunting, and she dances how she feels. And the Raven is powerful, bold, terrifying, and has something to say—and in our ballet, she’s a woman.”

A Haunting Score

Ballet Fantastique’s custom *Nevermore* score is perfectly tailored to capture the energy, rhythm, and emotion of Poe’s poetry. With titles like “The Nightmare,” “Nausea” and “Insanity,” each piece reflects the on-stage action with haunting precision. The score, performed live by [Liz Dorman](#) (piano, San Francisco Symphony), Sergei Teleshev (accordion) and Dale Bradley (cello) adds urgency and haunting disquiet to the production.

Ballet Fantastique has also collaborated with international YouTube celebrity composers Peter Gundry and Lucas King, marking their first collaborations with a ballet company. [Nathan Farrington](#) (Los Angeles), known for his work with renowned orchestras, including the LA Philharmonic and the Chicago Symphony, has arranged the music for *Nevermore*. This marks his debut Ballet Fantastique project.

About Ballet Fantastique

Founded in 2000 in Eugene, Ballet Fantastique (BFan) is an Emmy®-nominated dance theater company created by the dynamic mother-daughter Producer-Choreographer team, Donna Marisa Bontrager and Hannah Bontrager. BFan specializes in genre-defying, original dance theater productions with live music.

The company tours across the US and internationally and has been a Resident Company at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts since 2014. Ballet Fantastique has been celebrated as “a bold, cross-disciplinary dance company” (*Eugene Weekly*), “imaginative geniuses” (*Portland Monthly*) and “a company to watch” (*Eugene Magazine*), and profiled by *The Washington Post*.

More information and to purchase tickets: www.balletfantastique.org/nevermore.

Ballet Fantastique’s 23-24 Season is proudly presented by [Alpha IT](#).

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