



BALLET
FANTASTIQUE

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MOTHER'S DAY — MAY 11-14 — HULT CENTER

Robin Hood

LIVE MUSIC: Nottingham

Maid Marian



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 // **LIVESTREAM FOR INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES:** Sun. May 14 @ 2:30 pm PST
- **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 balletfantastique.org/robin

Ballet Fantastique's Mother's Day weekend World Premiere honors powerful women both on-stage and behind the scenes in *Robin Hood & Maid Marian*, where irresistible dance theater meets great personality and good triumphs all 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 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, where they fuse new dance theater choreography with powerful live music to tell the legend, bringing an unstoppable new Robin Hood and a brave Maid Marian to life.

This exciting new dance theater premiere also 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 Founding Resident Choreographer-Producers (and mother-daughter team), 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. 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!"



Robin Hood: Fredrick Davis (Davis)

Davis is an international freelance ballet dancer and his inspiring story the subject of the PBS documentary, "[From the Streets to the Stage: A Black Man in a 'White' Art](#)." He first graced the Hult Center stage in 2012, originating the role of Prince Charming in Ballet Fantastique's 60s rock opera version of *Cinderella*.

BFan's *Robin Hood & Maid Marian* features female leading voices in every leading 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. "This project is unique in so many ways."



Ballet Fantastique choreographer, producers and mother-daughter team Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager (Stephanie Urso)

The Bontragers' artistic vision for the work is to reimagine the legend with new resonance, power, and voices. "While it's rooted in ancient medieval influences in costuming, music, storytelling and aesthetics," says Hannah Bontrager, "This ballet is also about fresh perspectives. We're bringing these characters to live with new power and personality. We want to build something new, say something new, that's also uplifting and brings us together."

For this premiere, Ballet Fantastique has commissioned its first-ever full-length musical score with longtime BFan collaborator Liza Carbé with JP Durand. The LA-based team has written music for *Entertainment Tonight* as well as Paramount movies and TV. Liza's new compositions 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 love, but have not deeply explored until now."



Robin composer Liza Carbé (Carbé)

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 BFan 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."

Carbé's original score will be soon be available for audiences on Spotify and Apple Music, as well as CD and vinyl albums available for purchase at the performance premiere.

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 this year in Eugene, working collaboratively with Donna and Hannah and the BFan artists to set all the major fight scenes within this performance, including "Fight at the Banquet" and "Fight at the Tavern." *Robin Hood* with Ballet Fantastique 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!"

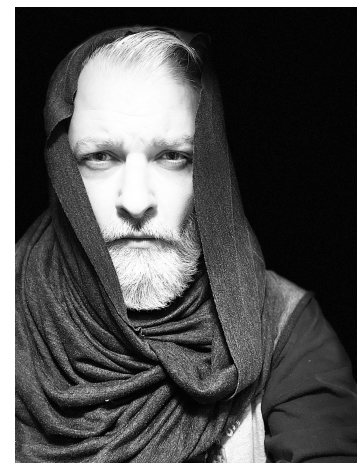


Robin Hood guest creative contributors: Narration writer/poet Dr. Barbara Mossberg and Hollywood guest fight choreographer Michelle Ladd in the Ballet Fantastique studio in residency for Robin Hood, April 2023 (Bob Williams)

International cast

Robin Hood & Maid Marian features an impressive world premiere cast, including Ballet Fantastique's resident professionals as well as international guests. Carolin Koeplin (with real childhood archery background!) originates the role of Lady Marian, Gustavo Ramirez is the Sheriff of Nottingham, Preston Andrew Patterson is Prince John, Gabriel Ritzmann is Little John, Ana Brooks is his brave sister, Cecily, and Ashley Bontrager is Lady Ashley. Guest actor Adam Goldthwaite plays The Bard/King Richard, weaving the action in medieval poetry written by Dr. Mossberg, and incorporating a surprise element for the audience and characters alike when he (spoiler alert) reveals himself in the ballet's final scene.

Guest artist Raymond Silos, Cirque du Soleil: Ballet Fantastique is excited to announce that Raymond Silos of Cirque du Soleil is joining the *Robin Hood* cast. Silos will perform the dual roles of the Circus Entertainer and Friar Tuck, adding his acrobatic skills (cyr wheel, trapeze) and dynamic stage presence to the international artist roster.



Adam Goldthwaite is the Bard/King Richard (photo: Goldthwaite)

Female-led world premiere 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.

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—three years in the making—to fruition.

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.

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.

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.

Peña has worked tirelessly in her California workshop to template and build custom set pieces for the project, including incorporating special effects techniques to imagine and create a unique archery target incorporating remote-controlled deadbolt technology for the *Robin Hood* Archery Competition. She uses counterbalance to build set pieces to a huge scale—and works solo.

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



Artists of Ballet Fantastique in Robin Hood world premiere rehearsals at the Ballet Fantastique studios, April 2023 (Bob Williams)

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.

About Ballet Fantastique: Ballet Fantastique is an award-winning, Emmy-nominated powerhouse for new dance theater based in the Pacific Northwest. More at balletfantastique.org

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