

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

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QUICK FACTS:

- **WHAT:** Ballet Fantastique's all-original contemporary ballet premiere of *The Odyssey: The Ballet*, with LIVE looping musician, Cullen Vance
- **CONCEPT + CHOREOGRAPHY:** All-original interpretation of Homer's *The Odyssey*, by choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager
- **EUGENE PERFORMANCES:** Fri. Mar. 1, 7:30pm; Sat. Mar. 2, 7:30pm; Sun. Mar. 3, 2:30pm, Soreng Theater, Hult Center
- **TICKETS:** \$35-76 (students/youth \$23-54), with \$5 off regularly priced tickets for groups of six or more. On sale now through the Hult Center Box Office: 541-682-5000 or www.hultcenter.org; Box Office hours T-F, 12-5pm; Sat. 11am-3pm

BFan's fierce, hauntingly beautiful contemporary ballet telling of Homer's epic poem features live looping electric violinist Cullen Vance

In Ballet Fantastique's all-original contemporary ballet version of *The Odyssey*, Choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager forge hypnotic, fierce, hauntingly beautiful new choreographic territory, celebrating the dramatic prowess of Ballet Fantastique's artists in translating Homer's spectacular characters and fantastic story through dance.

"This is the homeward voyage of a great warrior hero," says Donna Marisa Bontrager, Artistic Director of Ballet Fantastique. "Our choreography explores these great themes at the heart of the story—the triumph of the human spirit against incredible danger, the enduring power of love."

Homer's ancient poem (800 BC) is literature's grandest evocation of moral endurance through danger and caprice: Odysseus, King of Ithaca, has been imprisoned on the island of the nymph Kalypso following the Greek victory at Troy. Odysseus relies on his wit and wiliness in encounters with forces both natural and divine, including protectress Athena, bitter enemy Poseidon, the powerful witch-goddess Circe, and the fearsome Cyclops. Throughout Odysseus' ten-year quest to return to Ithaca, brave and faithful Queen Penelope is his beacon. Don't miss the energy and poetry of Homer's great epic tale, captured in Ballet Fantastique's trademark contemporary ballet theater idiom—a new *Odyssey* to treasure for its sheer lyrical, artistic splendor.

This Mar. 1-3 production features music from Athens-based Lyre 'n' Rhapsody, Audiomachine, and live looping electric violinist Cullen Vance. Vance will perform live with Ballet Fantastique's dancers in this unique project on stage at the Soreng Theater. In addition to Vance's original live looping compositions, the Bontragers have chosen a score that also includes recordings of Audiomachine, Max Richter, and Lyre 'n' Rhapsody, an all-female acoustic ensemble from Athens that re-works fragments of music and lyrical poetry from ancient Greek composers and poets.

"We are so honored not only to be working with Cullen, but also to have received permission to use the music of these internationally-recognized musical groups for our project," says Hannah Bontrager, Executive Director of Ballet Fantastique and co-Choreographer-Producer for Ballet Fantastique. "It feels like the music almost 'found' us—it truly explores and evokes the range of Odysseus's encounters and the characters in this great story. Some of it is so big it swallows you, some of it so subtle it just melts. The music is informing every step of new choreography. We're in love with our **Odyssey** and know our audience will love it, too."

Ballet Fantastique's **The Odyssey: The Ballet** opens with Vance's original "Invocation of the Muse" (dancer Ashley Bontrager), then sets the story's context—Odysseus, King of Ithaca (dancer Gabriel Ritzmann), imprisoned on the island of the nymph-goddess Kalypso (dancer Hannah Bontrager) following the victory at Troy, his faithful and clever Queen Penelope (dancer Tracy Fuller) at home, waiting seven years for his return. Ballet Fantastique's **Odyssey: The Ballet** then winds through the warrior-hero's encounters with forces both natural and divine, including protectress Athena (dancer Esperanza Montero), the beautiful, dangerous Siren (dancer Madeline Gambino), and the fearsome Cyclops (dancers Natan Lubow and Phoebe Green in a custom mask created by artist Adam Goldthwaite). While Ballet Fantastique's production team has embarked on extensive historical and literary research, and has chosen to closely mirror Homer's original text in their original production, they did want to make one significant change: they wanted to play with the character of Hermes, the messenger-god sent to release Odysseus from Kalypso's island.

"We wanted to re-write the character of Hermes as female," says Donna. "Hermes is the actor who helps to re-shape the story's action time and again, who makes Athena's will reality. Many of Homer's female characters are either dangerous seductress or must wait and pine. We love the idea that our Hermes [now "Mercury," danced by principal dancer Carolin Koeplin] is a female force in **The Odyssey** to be reckoned with."

Ballet Fantastique's **The Odyssey** is also a collaboration featuring celebrated local costume designers, lighting designers and set artists.

Says musician Vance of the group, "This show is the definition of epic. The story, the music, the dancing—all of it is larger than life, and I'm so stoked to be a part of it."

Tickets to **The Odyssey: The Ballet** are available in person or by phone through the Hult Center Box Office or online at balletfantastique.org.

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For high-resolution digital images of this production, please email info@balletfantastique.org.