

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

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10/1/2019 • For Immediate Release

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Ballet Fantastique's Opening Night Appeals to Lovers of Dance, Theater, Literature, and the Bizarre

BFan's Bold World Premiere Reimagines the Macabre Tales of Edgar Allan Poe.

FALL WORLD PREMIERE 2019: Nevermore: Stories of Edgar Allan Poe

with live music: Elizabeth Dorman, Sergei Teleshev, Dale Bradley and guest artist Alastair Morley Jaques

- Friday Oct. 25 and Saturday Oct. 26 at 7:30 pm; Sunday, Oct. 27 at 2:30 pm (Hult Center)
- Tickets \$28-76, with discounts for college students, youth, and groups of 6+

WORLD PREMIERE: A grand, luscious, and bizarre new ballet experience inspired by the dark romance and poetry of Victorian literary genius Edgar Allan Poe. Donna and Hannah's **Nevermore** casts BFan's actor-artists in Poe's blockbusters: *The Raven*, *Annabel Lee*, *Masque of the Red Death*, *Cask of Amontillado*, and *Fall of the House of Usher*. Gothic prose, electrifying encounters, and live songcraft.

LIVE MUSIC: Master guest musicians Elizabeth Dorman and Sergei Teleshev play the music of celebrity composers Lucas King and Peter Gundry. Surprises.

"We're so excited to be bringing world-class cross-disciplinary musical voices to the stage for *Nevermore*. Our audience is going to be completely spellbound by the custom score we're putting together to transport them to the worlds of Edgar Allan Poe," says Ballet Fantastique Artistic Director and **Nevermore** co-choreographer-producer Donna Marisa Bontrager.

For the world premiere project, LA-based composer-arranger Nate Farrington helped craft Ballet Fantastique's custom score, arranging the music of YouTube celebrity composers Lucas King and Peter Gundry in their first-ever collaborations with a ballet company, anywhere in the world. Guest pianist Elizabeth Dorman from San Francisco—whom has been hailed for her "elegance and verve" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*—is no stranger to innovation, having just performed with the LA Philharmonic at Burning Man. Dr. Dorman will be joined by area-based (and international-award-winning) Sergei Teleshev on button accordion, as well as special guest Dale Bradley on cello and Garrett Davis (sound engineering).

True to Ballet Fantastique form, **Nevermore** is a cross-disciplinary new work of hybrid dance theater, merging all-original new ballet choreography with live theater performance. Guest artist Alastair Morley Jaques (Portland, OR) specializes in Poe performance and re-enactment and will MC the performance, guiding the audience through each story and poem with excerpts from Poe's celebrated texts (1845-1849).

Ballet Fantastique's international roster of dancer-actors features principal dancer Gustavo Ramirez (Cali, Colombia) as the haunted lover in Poe's famed "Annabel Lee" with his (real-life girlfriend) principal dancer Ashley Bontrager (Eugene, OR) as Annabel. Ballet Fantastique soloist Gabriel Ritzmann (Florianópolis, Brazil) is the arrogant Prince Prospero fated to die in a doomed ballroom in Poe's "Masque of the Red Death." Donna and Hannah play off another real-life BFan romance, casting soloists Tracy Fuller (Denver, CO) and artist Jim Ballard (Midland, TX) opposite each other in Poe's "Cask of Amontillado," increasing the urgency in this first-person story with the added character of a lover to whom he's confessing his gory tale of a

murder long past. And in Poe's "The Raven," Donna and Hannah cast the title character as a female character—Ballet Fantastique soloist Carolin Koeplin (Idaho Falls, ID).

"Donna and I wanted the Speaker in Poe's poem to be able to dance the sense complex relationship he has with the Raven," says Hannah, Co-Choreographer-Producer of **Nevermore**. "By bringing these figments of the Speaker's horror, memory, and imagination alive through the physicality of our human dancers, we give them agency even as we want to give the story the urgency. Our Speaker physically interacts with the despair, inevitability, grief, anger he's feeling in the poem—all of these complex, powerful feelings we have when we lose someone we love and have these conversations with ourselves about why she can't come back."

"We've used repetition in the movement, and chosen songs that are even titled perfectly for the energy, rhythm, and emotion of Poe's poetry: 'The Nightmare,' 'Nausea,' and 'Insanity' are all aptly named for what you'll see on stage. And you have to hear these songs played live by Liz [Dorman, guest pianist] to feel the urgency and hauntingly beautiful disquiet they give you," adds Donna, Co-Choreographer-Producer of **Nevermore**.

Collaborating team

Eleanor Wakefield, Professor of English and longtime Ballet Fantastique guest ballet teacher, collaborated with Ballet Fantastique's creative team (Donna Bontrager and her sister Deborah Speer, Donna's daughter Hannah Bontrager and Deborah's daughter/Hannah's cousin Genevieve Speer—a veritable tribe of Ballet Fantastique women who are behind ten years of Ballet Fantastique sell-out dance theater premieres) in the initial creative and libretto stages. The project also features custom designs by dozens of Northwest-based artists who hold a regular role in Ballet Fantastique's critically acclaimed, award-winning world premiere design team: collaborators Allison Ditson and Noelle Guetti (costume design), Mitra DeMirza Gruwell (headpieces and masks), Gabriel Ritzmann (also a Soloist dancer at Ballet Fantastique, custom tiaras), Kelle DeForrest and Mike Ricker (set construction design, painting), with support from Primaddona Tutus and Grosh Theatrical (LA).

Music from YouTube celebrity composers Peter Gundry and Lucas King (in both composers' first-ever collaboration with a ballet company, anywhere in the world) has been arranged for Ballet Fantastique by collaborating artist Nathan Farrington (LA). Farrington has performed in the bass sections of America's finest orchestras, among them the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, East Coast Chamber Orchestra, and Seattle Symphony. As a soloist and chamber music collaborator, Farrington has appeared at the Marlboro Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival, Olympic Music Festival, ChamberFest Cleveland, and the Da Camera Society. A versatile artist of many talents, Farrington often travels with his guitar as well as his bass, singing and playing operatic arias and folk songs and arranging music. This is his first project with Ballet Fantastique.

Interviews will be accommodated. Please contact Liz Gill at The Gilmore Agency to arrange. 541.510.9833 or liz@thegilmoreagency.com

About Ballet Fantastique

Founded in 2000 in downtown Eugene, Ballet Fantastique brings to life great stories, with mischievous innovation, all live music—and bold, visionary new dance theater. Under the direction of mother-daughter Producer-Choreographer team Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager, Ballet Fantastique (BFan) creates and premieres genre-defying all original contemporary ballets. BFan's inimitable new works include a Wild West spin on Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, the first-ever authorized ballet version of *Zorro*® with the LA-based band Incendio and virtuoso violinist-composer Kim Angelis, the ancient epic of *The Odyssey* accompanied by the live looping electric violin of Cullen Vance, *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* with the DaXun Zhang and the Oregon Mozart Players, and *Aladdin: A Rock Opera Ballet* with Satin Love Orchestra playing the music of Queen. Ballet Fantastique has forged new cross-disciplinary collaborations with sculptors, choirs, opera and soloist vocalists, symphony and chamber orchestras, literary and visual artists, actors, break dancers, circus artists, and composers. Ballet Fantastique has been a Resident Company at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts since 2014. BFan has been heralded "a bold, cross-disciplinary dance company" (*Eugene Weekly*) "imaginative geniuses" (*Portland Monthly*), "not your grandmother's Swan Lake" (*Register-Guard*), and "a company to watch" (*Eugene Magazine*), and profiled by the *Washington Post*.