

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

**DONNA MARISA BONTRAGER
+ HANNAH BONTRAGER**
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For Immediate Release: Dec. 11, 2020

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QUICK FACTS:

- **WHAT:** *American Christmas Carol: A Ballet Movie*
- **ACCESS:** www.balletfantastique.org/christmasmovie, click on *CLICK TO RESERVE YOUR MOVIE EXPERIENCE*. Access begins at \$35. Additional donations are welcome. **Streaming now—Dec. 28, 2020 @ 11:59 pm.**
- **WATCH MOVIE TRAILER (1 MIN):** www.youtube.com/balletfantastique



Ballet Fantastique Brings Dickens, Dance Theater and Sinatra Into Your Living Room
Gather loved ones, near and far and enjoy Dickens' timeless story—like you've never seen it before.

For Immediate Release Dec. 10, 2020 — Charles Dickens, meet Ella Fitzgerald. Dance theater company Ballet Fantastique has created a new feature-length film, and it's not *The Nutcracker*.

Streaming through Dec. 28, 2020, ***American Christmas Carol: A Ballet Movie*** is Ballet Fantastique's 1940's jazz ballet spin on the Charles Dickens classic, now reimagined in post-WWII America...and told on the big screen. This genre-defying collaboration between cinematographer Jeremy Bronson and Choreographer-Producer team Donna and Hannah Bontrager was filmed in iconic locations across the lush Pacific Northwest in Fall 2020. The movie features Ballet Fantastique's team of international professional ballet dancers, who have been rehearsing in a quarantine bubble since July.

“This is a uniquely accessible blend of film, theater and classical ballet, used to tell a cultural touchstone story in a totally new way,” says Artistic Director Donna Marisa Bontrager. “It’s ballet theater on the big screen, for the time we’re living in right now.”

The movie score? Also far from traditional ballet: Donna and Hannah selected 15 vintage holiday jazz classics in a commissioned performance by international jazz star Halie Loren. Nominated for multiple independent music awards, Loren’s fresh takes on standards include the Ella Fitzgerald classic “Undecided” and Billie Holiday’s “God Bless the Child.” Traditionals like “Winter Wonderland,” “Let it Snow” and “I’ll Be Home For Christmas” round out the ballet movie’s retro-glam tracks and guide the ballet’s narrative arc.

If you haven’t brushed up on your Dickens recently, don’t worry: No advance reading is required. *American Christmas Carol* stars Adam Goldthwaite as a singing, dancing, smooth-talking “Smokey Joe” Marley. Smokey Joe is the Bontragers’ tasteful spoof on slimy Jacob Marley, Scrooge’s long-dead business partner—inspired by a 1938 Cab Calloway song entitled “The Ghost of Smokey Joe.”

“We knew we wanted one of the characters to narrate our telling. When we heard the Calloway song, it was too perfect,” says Choreographer-Producer Donna Marisa Bontrager. “This gravelly song about a really bad guy became our inspiration for a comedic character that drives our story’s drama. Artistically, Smokey Joe’s voice also lends our ballet a bit of grit and humor.”

Smokey Joe isn’t the only playful twist in the Bontragers’ *American Christmas Carol*: Donna Bontrager’s favorite artistic liberty was her choice to re-imagine the Christmas Spirits as female forces to be reckoned with.

“I wanted the spirits to be women,” says Bontrager on her choice to re-cast Dickens’ ghosts as female dancers. “These *pas de deux* are an opportunity to really embody Ebenezer’s relationship with his past, present and future. They dance with him, they manipulate him, they run at him, they challenge him.” The Spirits are danced by Ballet Fantastique dancers Hannah Bontrager (Christmas Past, to retro jazz hit “Why Don’t You Do Right”), Izzy Overstreet (Christmas Present, to Frank Sinatra’s “That’s Life”) and Carolin Koeplin (Christmas Future, to “Boulevard of Broken Dreams”). Ebenezer is danced by Ballet Fantastique’s Adam Bloodgood, a ballet dancer with extensive prior film experience.

American Christmas Carol: A Ballet Movie film set locations include: The turn-of-the-century Oregon Electric Station (Eugene, OR), Portland’s White House (Portland, OR), Trinity Episcopal Church (Portland, OR), Eugene Masonic Cemetery (Eugene, OR), Walker Union Church and Cemetery (Walker, OR), Ken Scott’s River Run Gallery (Leaburg, OR), the Shelton McMurphey Johnson House Museum (Eugene, OR), Mims Historic Cottage/NAACP Lane County (Eugene, OR), and community restaurants and bookstores local to Ballet Fantastique, including many closed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Executive Producer support is from Philip & Sandra Piele and Alpha IT. Costume design is by Donna Marisa Bontrager and Allison Ditson. First Assistant Director is Gustavo Ramirez.

NEW: Movie Experience Box Add-On Available

For enhanced movie viewing, Ballet Fantastique artists are delivering Movie Experience Boxes to local patrons, with gift shipping available across the continental US. *American Christmas Carol* Experience Boxes feature curated movie treats by NW artisan vendors and include an *American Christmas Carol: A Ballet Movie* DVD, autographed Halie Loren holiday CD, holiday blanket, organic microwave popcorn, hot cocoa and/or hot toddy kits, an autographed movie poster, and more. Full information is available at www.balletfantastique.org/christmasmovie.

Outreach access: Movie access for K-12 educators is available through Ballet Fantastique // Contact Outreach Director Arabella Tan at academy@balletfantastique.org. Priority access is being given to schools and districts affected by the Holiday Farm Wildfire. Outreach sponsorship is from Banner Bank.

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