

'Cinderella: A Rock Opera Ballet' at Hult this weekend

By Amber Hogan Oregon NewsLab



EUGENE, Ore. - If Disney had a princess who was a ballerina, it would be Hannah Bontrager.

When I watched Bontrager at Ballet Fantastique's rehearsal last week, I pictured her falling straight out of a rainbow landing high on her pink ballet slippers and leaving glitter in her wake as she tiptoed around. Her bubbly personality exudes such sweetness that I'm convinced she truly was made of sugar and spice and everything nice.

And then I met her mother. Turns out, though a bit quieter, Donna Marisa Bontrager must have been made from the same mix of sweet goodness.

The Bontragers are the mother-daughter duo behind the magic that is Ballet Fantastique, Academy and Chamber Ensemble here in Eugene (Hannah is the executive director, and Donna the artistic director).

I had the pleasure of meeting the welcoming pair at their open rehearsal for "Cinderella: A Rock Opera Ballet" set in 1964. You read that correctly, the Cinderella story told through a rock opera ballet accompanied by classic 60's billboard hits.

The open rehearsal was beyond delightful. Known as Open Barre, Ballet Fantastique invited the public to their upscale downtown location on the evening of May 2.

Guests of both genders, and many ages, came to watch the incredibly talented dancers rehearse with the also highly talented and lively musicians known as Shelley & Cal James & band. It was an intimate experience complete with a wine tasting, colorful hors d'oeuvres and real moments that happen during rehearsals. Those of age seemed to enjoy the wine, and most munched on the tasty pastel cookies in the shapes of butterflies and flowers non-the less.

But the real treat everyone savored was watching the dance that was the rehearsal itself: the Bontragers guided the musicians, the musicians lead the dancers, and the dancers lit up the faces in the room. It was fantastique.

Bring your mother or your father, grab your guy friend or your gal pal, round up the kids, or go solo and treat yourself to the ballet. Whatever your plans are this Mother's Day weekend, celebrate this mother-daughter duo who went from producing performances in cafeterias 14 years ago to the bright lights of the Hult Center.

"Cinderella: A Rock Opera Ballet" performs Saturday, May 12, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, May 13, at 2:30 p.m. at the Hult Center. Ticket prices are \$27 and \$33, not including student, youth, and senior discounts.

Tickets can be purchased at hultcenter.org or by dialing 541-682-5746.