

# *Preview: Rock Opera Ballet Version of Cinderella at Lincoln Performance Hall*

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*For the Portland Stage Reviews*

*"A rock opera is a work of rock music that presents a storyline told over multiple parts, songs or sections in the manner of opera. A rock opera differs from a conventional rock album, which usually includes songs that are not unified by a common theme or narrative. More recent developments include metal opera and rap opera (sometimes also called hip-opera). A rock opera tells a coherent story, and may involve songs performed as if sung by separate characters in a drama, as in classical opera."*

Imagine a version of Cinderella where the setting is 1964, the ball is prom, the dance moves are the Twist and the Mashed Potato ("It's the latest/It's the greatest"), and Cinderella goes by "Cindy." Choreographers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager have. The mother-daughter team directs the [Eugene-based contemporary ballet company Ballet Fantastique](#), and will bring their critically acclaimed



Cinderella: A Rock Opera Ballet to the [Lincoln Performance Hall](#) **Sunday, August 5 at 4 pm**. The all-original production recently sold out its run at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts and earned consecutive standing ovations.

Shelley and Cal James (of the famed Satin Love Orchestra) join the dancers live on stage with their Agents of Unity Band performing the show's soundtrack: fourteen hits from the early 60's, including "You Don't Own

Me," "And Then He Kissed Me," "Today I Met the Boy I'm Gonna Marry," and "Wild Thing." Shelley created all-new arrangements of each of the songs per the Bontragers' choreographic needs and the subtly adapted storyline.

Highlights of the two-act ballet include: Stepsisters "Dris" and "Stasia" harass Cindy in "Big Girls Don't Cry," which opens Act I; the Sunnydale Fairy Godmother tells Prince Charming "You Can't Hurry Love," and the stepsisters dream of the ball in their nighties to "Mr. Sandman." In Act II, Cindy enters to the Beatles' "Saw Her Standing There," the clock strikes twelve to "Save the Last Dance for Me," and when Prince Charming shows up with Cindy's missing pointe shoe, we hear "My Boyfriend's Back." For each of the show's fourteen scenes, the Bontragers created choreography referencing authentic movement from the period, while still challenging the Ballet Fantastique company dancers' classical technique and virtuosity.

Ballet Fantastique, a contemporary chamber company comprised of seven professional dancers from across the US, has made a name for itself in these kinds of out-of-the-box revisions of classic story ballets. Ballet



Fantastique's other original repertoire includes a raucous Wild West ballet version of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*; *Love at the Café Terrace*, a 25-minute ballet dramatizing Vincent Van Gogh's "Night at the Café Terrace" painting; and the sell-out *Arabian Nights*, a full-length original ballet dramatizing seven ancient tales from the 1,001 Nights, each with a compelling, nuanced female protagonist.

Collaborating with live musicians is another Ballet Fantastique signature, and the idea for the "rock opera" version of *Cinderella* came when the Bontragers decided to produce a collaboration with Shelley and Cal James that wasn't what Hannah calls "just another mixed-repertory show...We wanted to take the standard ballet company/live music collaboration up a notch."

"We have been honored to work with Shelley and Cal on this challenging artistic endeavor. They're world-class musicians and such fun to collaborate with," says Donna. Shelley adds, "As musicians and songwriters, we strive to put a unique spin on any cover songs we arrange, so it's been a perfect match to be working with Ballet Fantastique for this creative twist on the Cinderella classic."

Shelley and Cal's Agents of Unity Band includes: Joe Weber (lead electric guitars), Rica Wright Weber (background vocals/percussion), Tom Teutsch (rhythm/backing guitars), Jason Palmer (drums), Shelley James (lead vocals/acoustic guitar), Cal James (bass guitar/background vocals), and Jennifer Scurlock (background vocals).

Ballet Fantastique was founded in 2000. The company has performed throughout the Northwest, and will tour its As You Like It: A Wild West Ballet to San Benedetto, Italy, in July 2013. Cinderella: A Rock Opera Ballet will be Ballet Fantastique's first performance in Portland. The ballet is appropriate for all ages; run time is 90 minutes, including a 20-minute intermission

EXCLUSIVE SUMMER CINDERELLA: A ROCK OPERA BALLET TOUR:

Friday, August 3 at 7 pm: Florence Events Center

Sunday, August 5 at 4 pm: Lincoln Performance Hall, PSU campus, downtown Portland

**Ballet Fantastique's 2012-2013 season:**

**October 22-23:** Cirque de la Lune (with Mood Area 52, Betty & the Boy, and Troupe Carnivale LIVE)

**Feb. 2-3, 2012:** The Misadventures of Casanova (with guest Russian choreographer Dina Fadayevea)

**May 4-5, 2013:** Pride & Prejudice (Jane Austen's classic tale set in the French Quarter of New Orleans with Gerry Rempel Jazz Syndicate LIVE)

**Summer 2013:** The company tours As You Like It: A Wild West Ballet to Italy

**Mission Statement:** Ballet Fantastique, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, keeps classical ballet vibrantly alive in our city through unique, community-centered, world-class training, educational, and performance experiences for young artists, audiences, and professionals.