

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

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+ HANNAH BONTRAGER**  
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## QUICK FACTS:

- **WHAT:** Ballet Fantastique's first holiday contemporary ballet premiere, *An American Christmas Carol*, with LIVE music from international chart-topping jazz singer Halie Loren and her jazz ensemble
- **CONCEPT + CHOREOGRAPHY:** All-original, by choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager
- **EUGENE PERFORMANCES:** Fri. Dec. 12, 7:30pm; Sat. Dec. 13, 7:30pm; Sun. Dec. 14, 2:30pm, SoReNG Theater, Hult Center; tickets \$29-49 (students/youth \$17-23), with \$5 off regularly priced tickets for groups of five or more. On sale now through the Hult Center Box Office: 541-682-5000 or [www.hultcenter.org](http://www.hultcenter.org); Box Office hours T-F, 12-5pm; Sat. 11am-3pm
- **FLORENCE PERFORMANCE:** Fri. Dec 19 at 7:30pm, Florence Events Center; tickets \$24 regular reserved seating (students/youth \$16). On sale now at the Florence Events Center Box Office: 541-997-1994 or [www.eventcenter.org](http://www.eventcenter.org); Box Office hours M-F, 9:30am-4:30pm
- Please note: Advance ticket purchase highly recommended (Ballet Fantastique sells out)

**Charles Dickens meets Ella Fitzgerald in Ballet Fantastique's new holiday tradition:  
*An American Christmas Carol*, Dec. 12-14 at the Hult and Dec. 19 at the Florence Events Center**

Ballet Fantastique is creating its first ever holiday contemporary ballet, ***An American Christmas Carol***, and true to BFan form, it's ballet like you've never seen it before. Choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager premiere their new work Dec. 12-14 at the Hult Center and Dec. 19 at the Florence Events Center.

The all-original, 70-minute work is a collaboration between Ballet Fantastique choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager and international chart-topping jazz singer Halie Loren. Loren and her jazz ensemble will perform live with the company's nine dancers in this unique project, which sets the Charles Dickens classic in the US in the 1940s to holiday standards by Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, and Billie Holiday. Guest actor/singer Adam Goldthwaite joins the artists and narrates the ballet as "Smokey Joe" Marley; the Bontragers borrow his character's name from the so-titled 1939 Cab Calloway song.

Loren is best known for her purity of tone and rare interpretive prowess. She brings a fresh and original perspective to time-honored musical paths, forging bonds with diverse audiences in North America, Asia, and Europe. Loren's 2013 "Simply Love" rose to the top of Japan's charts in pop and jazz even before its release, claiming No. 1 in its first week. Loren's originals have earned multiple nominations for Independent Music Awards. In *An American Christmas Carol*, Loren is accompanied by her jazz ensemble: Matt Treder (piano), Mark Schneider (bass), Brian West (drums/percussion), and David Larsen (saxophone/clarinet).

"Our score for *An American Christmas Carol* is 17 iconic standards songs that will take the audience on a journey through two distinct, but related musical traditions—big band jazz and the popular songwriting of Tin Pan Alley," says Artistic Director Donna Marisa Bontrager. The Bontragers worked with Loren to choose from songs already in her repertoire and to introduce new pieces, including the Ella Fitzgerald classic "Undecided," which Loren sings when fiancée Marilyn breaks off her engagement with the

ever-greedier young Ebenezer. Traditionals including “Winter Wonderland,” “Baby It’s Cold Outside,” “Let it Snow,” and “I’ll Be Home For Christmas” also set the stage for the Bontragers’ retro-glam choreography.

Of the collaboration, Loren says: “Working with Ballet Fantastique on this production is the realization of a long-time dream of mine to integrate my music with dance performance. I truly could not ask for a better dance company to collaborate with! Ballet Fantastique is a truly inspired group with amazing visionaries at the helm.”

Donna and Hannah’s *An American Christmas Carol* opens with an introduction to Ebenezer Scrooge (Ballet Fantastique’s Portuguese leading artist Fabio Simoes), Joan and Bob Crachit (Lydia Rakov and Jim Ballard), and nephew and new daughter-in-law Fred and Judy (Justin Feimster and Hannah Bontrager). As Scrooge’s pessimistic personality emerges, he has a strange vision in the old clock—not of the clock face, but of Marley, his partner dead now seven years to the day (actor-singer-narrator Adam Goldthwaite). The vision fades and Scrooge drifts off to sleep. Marley re-appears, singing and dancing in “The Ghost of Smokey Joe” with his “Joe’s Girls” (Donna and Hannah liken these ghost brides to the willies of the classical ballet *Giselle*—ghosts of other women who died alone after losing their betrotheds to greed). Marley and the Girls warn Scrooge that he will be haunted by three ghosts that night, the ghosts of Christmas Past (Krislyn Wessel), Present (new BFan artist Jocelyn Wright), and Future (Hannah Bontrager). As promised, on the stroke of one, Christmas Past arrives with retro jazz hit “Why Don’t You Do Right,” reminding Ebenezer of love gained and lost when he met Marilyn (Ashley Bontrager) at Fezziwig’s party (now set in the Roaring 20’s to Fitzgerald’s “It Don’t Mean a Thing”). After returning to bed (and after the audience returns from intermission), Scrooge is visited by Christmas Present in Sinatra’s “That’s Life.” Christmas Present shows Scrooge the joys of Christmas through visions of Fred and Judy, and the Crachit family. Here, we will meet Tiny Tim, who finds joy and delight in the world in spite of adversity (Nat King Cole’s “Nature Boy”). The audience then meets Christmas Future (Alfred Hibbler’s “After the Lights Go Down Low”), who shows Scrooge what to expect of his future if he doesn’t change his stingy ways. After his kiss with death, Scrooge emerges a changed man, “glowing with his good intentions, as light as a feather, happy as an angel, and as merry as a schoolboy.”

“I wanted the spirits to be women,” says Donna Bontrager on her choice to re-cast Dickens’ ghosts as female dancers. “These *pas de deus* 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.”

“We’re working in our choreography to fuse drama and humor, creating a performance experience that accurately communicates both the humor and the pathos in Dickens’ tale,” says Hannah Bontrager. “Do you remember how *funny* this story is?! BFan loves comedy, and the dancers in our new telling are at turns hauntingly beautiful and laugh-out-loud funny. It’s a performance that is totally fun and kid-friendly, but with the jazz and the iconic post-WWII setting, also gives grown-ups a new holiday tradition.”

“Pairing the nostalgia of 1940’s music with such a well-known story as it has never before been told creates an experience of pure, nostalgic magic with a healthy dose of Film Noir glamour...” Says Loren. “It’s definitely unlike anything I have performed before.”

Tickets to *An American Christmas Carol* are available in-person or by phone through the Hult Center and Florence Events Center Box Offices, or online at [balletfantastique.org](http://balletfantastique.org).

Loren is a Eugene native and graduated from South Eugene High School in 2002 (with Hannah, SEHS 2002, and Adam, SEHS 2001!). Nearly 1,000 local Lane County schoolchildren will experience the performance at Ballet Fantastique’s outreach performances on Thurs. Dec. 11 (sold out).

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For high-resolution images of the production, please email [info@balletfantastique.org](mailto:info@balletfantastique.org).