

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

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## FALL 2016 ALL ORIGINAL BALLET FANTASTIQUE CONTEMPORARY BALLET WITH LIVE MUSIC

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### QUICK FACTS:

- **WHAT:** Ballet Fantastique's original contemporary ballet, *Pride & Prejudice: A Parisian Jazz Ballet*, with LIVE music from Gerry Rempel Jazz Syndicate
- **PERFORMANCES:** Friday Oct. 14 and Saturday Oct. 15 at 7:30 pm; Sunday, Oct. 16 at 2:30 pm
- All shows in the Soreng Theater, Hult Center. Tickets \$29-49 (students/youth \$18-24), with \$5 off regularly priced tickets for groups of 6+. On sale now through the Hult Box Office: 541-682-5000 or [www.balletfantastique.org](http://www.balletfantastique.org)

### *Pride & Prejudice: Ballet Fantastique turns Austen into a Mad Hot (French) Romantic Comedy*

Take your seat for ballet like you've never seen it before. Ballet Fantastique's bold 16-17 season opens with a playful foray into Jane Austen's classic romance from resident choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager. And true to Ballet Fantastique form, there's a twist: *Pride & Prejudice: A Parisian Jazz Ballet* brings Austen's spirited women, nosy neighbors, embarrassing relatives, determined bachelors, and smarmy cads to life—in 1920's Paris.

Live jazz by Gerry Rempel Jazz Syndicate—including both iconic music from the era and original new works by Rempel—sets the score.

"We're big Jane Austen fans," confesses Hannah, "...and we always have been. When we first started asking ourselves if we could move *Pride & Prejudice* to Roaring 20's Paris, I actually emailed two of my favorite former UO English Literature professors to talk it through with them," says Hannah. "We wanted to make sure that we could pull this ambitious idea off—while still maintaining the integrity of Austen's themes."

The move is ambitious indeed, but University of Oregon professors Liz Bohls and Diane Dugaw agreed—it could work. After all, Austen’s novel expresses a search for self in the midst of shifting societal expectations, and the 20’s were a particularly fascinating time, especially for women: as jazz music roared, the flapper redefined modern womanhood.

Ballet Fantastique’s telling: Three traditional, upper-class Brits stumble into the Bennette girls’ avant-garde Parisian jazz cabaret in a smoky back alley in Montmartre—Fitzwilliam Darcy, Charles Bingley, and Bingley’s haughty sister, Caroline. There, at the “Moulin Bleu” jazz cabaret, Austen’s story unfolds to rollicking retro live French jazz, as the fiery (now-French) Elizabeth Bennette (“Bennet,” in Austen’s original, of course) and her four sisters meet and mingle with the single, rich, and proud tourists—and the charming and dangerous George Wickham. All is narrated as if it’s a wedding homily/sermon by regular BFan guest actor Adam Goldthwaite as the hilarious Parson Collins.

“This is my dream role,” says Ashley Bontrager, who dances the role of Lizzie Bennette. “Lizzie is one of my favorite heroines because she embodies it all—the perfect balance of wit, charm, and beauty to captivate almost everyone she encounters. While following her heart and going against society and her mother’s wishes, it all turns out well in the end, and her story is about a woman who always follows her heart, and ultimately earns the respect and love of a handsome, intelligent man with a very rich inheritance! It’s a fairy tale, really.”

On the choreographic aesthetic, Donna remarks, “I’m emphasizing rhythms and asking the dancers to move with fiercely detailed, quick musicality and detailed arm and hand movements to evoke the style of the period. We’re using irregular and asymmetrical formations and patterns to show how the era was challenging the traditional. The dancers are telling me that they’re loving moving so fast.”

Rempel, director of the Jazz Syndicate, performs with and composes for contemporary jazz and blues ensembles throughout the Northwest, and recently toured China playing with the University of Oregon Gospel Choir.

On creating and arranging music for the ballet premiere, he says, “Much of the material has been worked up from scratch, and yes, that has been a lot of work,” says Rempel. “But it’s a wonderful opportunity to collaborate with Ballet Fantastique. The dynamism of the ballet working with the live music ensembles is energizing for the arts in our area and a different animal for us. It’s fun.”

Singer Meyer adds: “Having grown up in a French culture, it is especially thrilling to be able to share my love of French music with Ballet Fantastique and its audience.”

Be prepared for a playful battle between pride and passion in what Ballet Fantastique does best: all-original choreography, live music, and a daring twist on a classic story in *Pride & Prejudice: A Parisian Jazz Ballet*.

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