

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

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QUICK FACTS:

- **WHAT: DOUBLE FEATURE:** World premiere of Ballet Fantastique's all-original new contemporary ballet, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, plus BFan's all-original *Tales from the Floating World* (premiere 2014)
- **LIVE MUSIC:** DaXun Zhang and the Oregon Mozart Players (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*), plus international koto player Mitsuki Dazai (*Tales from the Floating World*)
- **CONCEPT + CHOREOGRAPHY:** All-original, by choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontrager
- **PERFORMANCES:** Fri. & Sat. Mar. 3-4, 7:30 pm; Sun. Mar. 5, 2:30 pm; Soreng Theater, Hult Center.
- **TICKETS:** \$28-58 (students/youth \$18-43), 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. Please note: Advance ticket purchase highly recommended (3/3 and 3/5 performances already nearly sold out)
Student Outreach Performance: Thurs. Mar. 2, 10 am; Soreng Theater, Hult Center. Interested student groups, please contact Andrew King, Outreach Coordinator (info@balletfantastique.org or 541-342-4611)

**Ballet Fantastique's next world premiere:
CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON**
An epic Chinese tale of honor, romance, and adventure
set to Tan Dun's award-winning movie score

Ballet Fantastique presents its next cross-disciplinary world premiere: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, March 3-5, 2017 at the Hult Center. Set to contemporary Chinese composer Tan Dun's award-winning score for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Ballet Fantastique choreographer-producers Donna Marisa and Hannah Bontragers' creative partnership includes the Oregon Mozart Players (under Artistic Director Kelly Kuo) and international award-winning cellist DaXun Zhang, who will be playing live for the performances.

"Ballet Fantastique is all about surprises, and there are no few in this project," says Artistic Director Donna Marisa Bontrager. "In *Crouching Tiger*, we're again pushing the envelope and creating a world with our space in the intimate Soreng Theater. With 25 musicians—including five percussionists and a harp—this is one of BFan's most ambitious projects to date!"

The *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* project has been funded in part by a generous \$25,000 grant from the Nils B. and Jewel Hult Endowment Fund. The total project cost is estimated to be over \$100,000.

In addition to the 30-minute *Crouching Tiger: Hidden Dragon* project, Ballet Fantastique will reprise five short ballets from the company's 2014 *Tales from the Floating World*, with international koto player Mitsuki Dazai, live.

HISTORY/CONTEXT

First penned in an ancient Chinese poem by Yu Xin (513-581) and modernized in an early 20th century pulp fiction novel, the phrase “crouching tiger, hidden dragon” describes a place or situation full of unnoticeable masters...of inner strength, hidden from the world. In 2001, director Ang Lee brought his story to life in a *wuxia* film—and won over 40 awards for it, including the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, four BAFTAs, and two Golden Globes. *Crouching Tiger* continues to be hailed as one of the most influential and highest-grossing foreign films in the United States. (In fact, the story captured such attention—and commanded such imagination—that it has also been adapted into a video game and a comic series.)

The award-winning *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* score was composed by Tan Dun, a Chinese contemporary classical composer and conductor most widely known for his movie scores, as well as composing music for the 2008 Beijing Olympics medal ceremonies. His works are often inspired by traditional Chinese theatrical and ritual performance.

ADAPTING THE STORY FOR BALLET

As the story unfolds, its central themes of love, longing, power, redemption, and the lies that people live (be they for fear, uncertainty, or obligation) drive intense action, epically beautiful martial arts battles that critics have oft-called “balletic.”

Focused not so much on the struggles of the story’s female leads with each other, Donna and Hannah are using their original choreography to explore how these battles express the individual spirits of each character and their conflicts with society, with themselves, and with each other.

“In fact, it’s almost these internal conflicts we’re most excited to explore,” says Hannah. Donna and Hannah’s choreography will fuse abstract diverse dance styles to give voice and vision to the grand story’s bold action, sweeping romance, and fantastic imagination, drawing on martial arts traditions in the telling.

“True to BFA form, we’re drawing on diverse movemental inspiration and source material in creating our new choreography,” says Donna. “We’re immersing the company in martial arts and classical Asian dance material to start the embodied experience of moving in a new way—even as we craft the new choreography.”

Also a principal dancer with the company, Hannah Bontrager will dance the part of the wild, yet deceptive Jen Yu, who secretly desires to be free and independent of social obligation. Opposite her character will be the older, wiser, and powerful Yu Shu Lien, played by Ashley Bontrager. Gustavo Ramirez will dance the part of Master Li Mu Bai, the conflicted Wudan master warrior who longs to be with Shu Lien as a lover, but is at odds with his desire for detachment and a life of meditation on Wudang Mountain. Jade Fox, the assassin of Li Mu Bai’s master, and principal antagonist to all in this tale, will be portrayed by Amanda Coleman. Natanael Leal will play the part of a swashbuckling, charming bandit named Lo—who is also a secret lover to the aristocratic Jen Yu.

Tales from the Floating World features stories including: The Celestial-Feathered Robe, in which a beautiful tennyō (angelic creature) leaves her cloak meets a poor fisherman who has inadvertently stolen her wings (Ashley Bontrager with Gustavo Ramirez); the Wisteria Maiden, who, alone, dances the story of love from passion to betrayal (Carolyn Koepplin); the Legend of Thunder, wherein the Mountain Wizard (Natanael Leal) imprisons the Rain Goddess (guest artist Jane Morgan from Suzanne Farrell Ballet), until Princess Taema (Leanne Mizzoni) melts him with her beauty and he awakens to find her gone, erupting in thunder; the Moon Princess (Hannah Bontrager), found by the Bamboo Cutters (Natanael Leal and Amanda Coleman) and beloved by the Emperor of Japan (Gustavo Ramirez) until she must return home; and the Tale of the Morning Glory, a Japanese kabuki story as well known in the culture as “Romeo and Juliet” (with Gustavo Ramirez and Leanne Mizzoni).

FEATURED MUSICIANS

Cellist DaXun Zhang has established himself as an unparalleled artist, earning the highest praise from both critics and audiences alike. DaXun Zhang comes from a family of bassists in Harbin, China. He has been playing the instrument since the age of nine, and studied at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing beginning at the age of eleven. He continued his studies in the U.S. at the Interlochen Arts Academy and received his Artist Diploma at the Indiana University School of Music, where he worked with Lawrence Hurst. He has served on the faculty of Northwestern University and is the Associate Professor of Double Bass at the University of Texas at Austin.

Oregon Mozart Players Artistic Director Kelly Kuo, the recipient of a 2009 Solti Foundation US Career Assistance Award for young conductors, has been praised by the *Cincinnati Enquirer* as “a leader of exceptional musical gifts, who has a clear technique on the podium and an impressive rapport with audiences.” Kuo’s recent conducting engagements include a debut with concert:nova, successful returns to the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Cincinnati Opera, Anchorage Opera, and the Malta Philharmonic, and acting as cover conductor for Peter Oundjian with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Kelly holds a Master in Music in Piano from the Manhattan School of Music and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Oregon, where he majored in both music and Chinese, and he is an alumnus of the Houston Grand Opera Studio.

Koto player Mitsuki Dazai is a graduate of both Tokyo’s prestigious Kunitachi College of Music, and of the Sawai Koto Conservatory, where she studied with the world-renowned virtuoso Kazue Sawai, and received her certificate in koto instruction. Dazai moved to Oregon in 2002, serving as a guest lecturer at the University of Oregon and Marylhurst University, and touring throughout the US, Europe, and Japan. Dazai has been featured on Oregon ArtBeat, and released two CDs—2007’s *Autumn*, and 2010’s *Far Away . . . Romances for Koto* (made in collaboration with Grammy nominated composer Michael Hoppé).

Tickets for *Crouching Tiger: Hidden Dragon* are available in-person at the Hult Center or online at balletfantastique.org.

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For high-resolution digital images of the production, please email bfan.assistant@gmail.com.