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## Ballet Fantastique's Chamber Ballet Company Grows Big While Remaining Small

EUGENE, ORE – October 16, 2008 – Acclaimed by Northwest dance critics as “impressive and spectacular,” Ballet Fantastique’s 5-member chamber ballet company, co-founded and directed by mother-daughter team Donna Bontrager and Hannah Bontrager, has found the balance between mastering artistry and dynamism, and offering intimate performance experiences that truly connect the performers with audience members.

“I simply cannot believe how much growth Ballet Fantastique has achieved in the past year. We have performed for thousands of new audience members, yet managed to keep our concert experiences intimate—as befits a 'chamber' ensemble and our mission,” says Donna Bontrager.

### PAST PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Ballet Fantastique has performed both repertory created especially for the chamber ballet company by professional choreographers and selections from such classical ballet favorites as *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, *Don Quixote*, *Le Corsaire*, and *The Nutcracker*. New works choreographed include *The Cakewalk Ballet*, variations to Handel’s *Water Music* and Chopin waltzes, and various other original pieces that encompass a wide range of musical styles and movement vocabularies.

Ballet Fantastique’s chamber ballet company prides itself in its ability to keep classical ballet vibrantly alive, while remaining on the frontier of dance innovation of new work that is simultaneously compelling and evocative. These innovations include first-time collaborations with renowned Northwest musicians and artists.

“Ballet Fantastique is thrilled with our fast-growing reputation as an up-and-coming new Northwest ballet company,” says Hannah Bontrager. “As a chamber group, our small roster of stellar dancers is agile enough to collaborate with some of the top musical groups in our area, including the Eugene Symphony, the Oregon Mozart Players, and the internationally-acclaimed Trio Voronezh. Innovative collaborations with groups like these on brand-new ballets are a cornerstone of our vision for future growth. We want to continue to get new audiences as excited about Ballet Fantastique as we are!”

## **08-09 REPERTORY SEASON OVERVIEW**

In its third season, Ballet Fantastique's chamber ballet company will dazzle and enthrall its audience members with four spectacular programs. The first is an all-new ballet rendition of *Carnival of the Animals*. Commissioned by the Eugene Symphony, *Carnival of the Animals* will include a "carnival" of chamber company dancers, in roles ranging from the Lion to the Swan.

In December, Ballet Fantastique will partner with Southern Oregon's Ballet Rogue for their production of the timeless holiday classic *The Nutcracker*.

Then, just in time for Valentine's Day, Ballet Fantastique will have its audience members thinking in red with *Danse en Rouge: Variations in Red*. This mixed-repertory concert will feature Ballet Fantastique and Northwest musicians and artists at their best. On-stage collaborations will include performances by the Trio Voronezh and new choreography to the Spanish guitar of Eugene's John Jarvie. Art by some of the Northwest's most celebrated visual artists will be projected behind dancers on stage to set the scene. *Danse en Rouge* will include pieces that explore a range of emotions and themes inspired by the color red, from excerpts from the fiery Spanish ballet *Don Quixote*, to new tango and bossa nova pieces, to the much-anticipated premiere of a ballet set to John Corigliano's Oscar-winning score for the *Red Violin*.

The season will come to a close with another collaboration with Ballet Rogue for a free night of beauty and enchantment with *Ballet in the Park*.

## **COMPANY MEMBERS**

Ballet Fantastique's chamber ballet company includes a roster of five dancers. Members have earned such prestigious awards as the Best Performing Award for senior ballet division at the Tao Li Bei National Ballet Competition in Shanghai and an invitation to join renowned Kirov prima ballerina Mme. Alla Sizova's advanced class at the Kirov Academy of Ballet.

Ballet Fantastique's small roster of diverse soloist-caliber dancers allows for a more intimate performance experience, while still calling for a big splash in terms of the compelling artistry offered.

"After every performance, Ballet Fantastique company dancers walk off the stage through the audience, shaking hands, meeting audience members, answering questions. To me, this shows what we're all about: Ballet Fantastique is breaking barriers between the audience and the 'performer'—making dance exciting, accessible, intriguing, something that people can and *want* to relate to again and again," says Ashley, a company dancer.

"Our dancer roster has grown to include a group of incredibly strong professional dancers from across the Northwest," says Donna Bontrager. "Hannah and I can't wait to challenge them to reach new levels of technique and artistry."

## **BALLET FANTASTIQUE MISSION/VISION**

Ballet Fantastique is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to keeping classical ballet vibrantly alive in our city through community-centered, world-class training, educational and performance experiences for young artists, audiences and professionals. For further information about Ballet Fantastique and the 2008-2009 performance season, visit Ballet Fantastique's website at [www.balletfantastique.org](http://www.balletfantastique.org) or call (541) 206-8977.