

ANTHONY ROSARIO IS ALADDIN

PHOTO BY STEPHANIE URSO



BALLET FANTASTIQUE CELEBRATES A PAIR OF PREMIERES

Ring in the new year, Ballet Fantastique (BFan) launches two exciting premieres, with stagings of *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon* and *Aladdin*.

EW recently caught up with the company's mother-daughter artistic team, Donna Marisa Bontrager and Hannah Bontrager, to learn about their collective vision for bringing these beloved tales to life.

Crouching Tiger, *Hidden Dragon*, a classic piece of martial arts fiction (known as Wuxia), runs March 3-5 at the Hult Center.

"True to BFan form, we're drawing on diverse movement inspiration and source material in creating our new choreography," says BFan artistic director and choreographer-producer Donna Marisa Bontrager. "We're immersing the company in martial arts and classical Asian dance material to start the embodied experience of moving in a new way."

The Oregon Mozart Players will collaborate, and the performance features notable double bass player DaXun Zhang.

"In *Crouching Tiger*, we're pushing the envelope and creating a world with our space in the intimate Soreng Theater," says BFan executive director and choreographer-producer Hannah Bontrager. "One of the surprises in this production is the logistical challenge of accommodating 25 musicians, including a harp."

The creative team says the costumes, sets and props for the extraordinary *Crouching Tiger* universe inspire their creativity.

"Our design team is being stretched in new ways — including extensive historical sword, martial arts and fashion research — for

this project," Donna Bontrager explains. "As a designer, I am especially in love with the fabric mix and bold color palette I'm using for *Crouching Tiger*. We're playing with a lot of juxtaposition — lines, colors, textures — and it's so much fun."

And May 12-14, the company premieres *Aladdin*, set in the disco era of the 1970s. The new work features the Satin Love Orchestra playing music by Queen.

"Aladdin is a ragamuffin champion for social unrest, indomitably optimistic in the midst of rigid socio-political dictates," Hannah Bontrager says. "Jasmine is a girl tired of being confined, resolutely defiant. She'll make her own choices and craft her own destiny. An act of stupidity, or bravery, meets with a trick of fate and everything changes."

Aladdin is a well-known story, thanks to the 1992 Disney animated film, but its source is much older and culturally rooted, Donna Bontrager says.

"Yes, it's the ancient tale of Aladdin, beloved from the Islamic Golden Age to the golden age of Disney," she explains. "But — here's the BFan twist — this is also the story of the U.S. in the 1970s. It's the story of social unrest, protest and campaigns for social justice for women and minorities, and underdog activism, bravery and the luck represented by a draft card."

Crouching Tiger, *Hidden Dragon* premieres March 3-5; *Aladdin* premieres May 12-14. Both shows are at the Hult Center. Tickets available at balletfantastique.org. — Rachael Carnes

OREGON BACH FESTIVAL COMES HOME TO UO'S NEW BERWICK HALL

If you've sidled by the University of Oregon campus just west of the Pioneer Cemetery recently, you've undoubtedly seen a huge construction project underway. The building, Berwick Hall, will serve as new digs for the Oregon Bach Festival (OBF), and the stalwart group's leaders couldn't be more pleased.

"OBF began in 1970 as a conducting workshop sponsored by the UO School of Music," says OBF's director of artistic administration Michael Anderson. "It was founded by UO Professor of Choral Studies Dr. Royce Saltzman and renowned German conductor Helmuth Rilling."

In the early years, Anderson explains, the office was in the School of Music and was known as the University of Oregon Summer Festival of Music.

"The festival gradually expanded, and in 1979 it was re-named Oregon Bach Festival," Anderson says. "In 1982 the large scale performances were moved over to the new Hult Center for the Performing Arts. In the early '90s, the offices were moved over to Agate Hall and later to an office building in the Riverfront Research Park.

Berwick Hall represents a coming home of sorts in its location adjacent to the School of Music.

"This location will enable us to better manage concerts and educational activities at the School of Music while we continue our presence at the Hult Center," Anderson says.

The new space will offer artists and audiences a superb state-of-the-art rehearsal and performance room.

"OBF artists and Berwick Academy members will enjoy a beautiful new rehearsal room with wonderful acoustics," Anderson says. "This room will also serve as an excellent venue for small performances for audiences up to 100 to 150 people. Berwick Hall will also house the OBF administrative offices, offering much better proximity of artists, community and staff."

OBF expects the building to be fully operational in the fall of 2017.

"We plan to fine-tune the acoustics during the 2017 festival, as well as use the hall for rehearsals during the summer," Anderson says. — Rachael Carnes

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