

# Ballet

NEBRASKA

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 22, 2012

Contact: Erika Overturff, (402) 541-6946

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## VARIED INSPIRATIONS DRIVE BALLET NEBRASKA'S MOMENTUM

OMAHA -- From history to romance to sports, this year's edition of Ballet Nebraska's *Momentum* will showcase the range of inspirations that drive choreographers' creativity, director Erika Overturff said.

The production, March 30 and 31 at Joslyn Art Museum, features seven short ballets chosen to highlight the variety of their creators' ideas, she said.

"The spark for a new ballet can come from almost anywhere," said Overturff. "For example, I've choreographed two works for *Momentum*, and their sources couldn't be more different."

Overturff said her dramatic ballet *Cleopatra* was inspired by Joslyn's current touring exhibit, *To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum*. "Cleopatra was a fascinating woman, renowned for her beauty, intelligence, and political adeptness," Overturff said. "Seeing the artifacts in the exhibit -- things actually made and touched by people of her era -- really brought to life the times in which she lived."

Overturff said her other ballet on the program, *Americano*, is a light-hearted duet inspired by a Neapolitan pop song of the 1950s, *Tu vuoi fà l'americano* ("You're just an American wannabe.")

"When I heard the song, I had a mental picture of a young Italian guy who wants to impress his American sweetheart," she said. "It's a perfect role for Ballet Nebraska's own Italian dancer, Alberto Liberatoscioli."

Other works on the *Momentum* program are:

- *DanceSport*: A comic look at the intersection between dance and sports, created by renowned Chicago-based choreographer and showman Harrison McEldowney, who also created Ballet Nebraska's popular *Swing, Swing, Swing* and *Call It Off*;
- *Bacchanale Variations*, a work for four women by Ballet Nebraska ballet master Matthew Carter, who described it as "all about beautiful music, glamorous ballet dancers and virtuoso dancing";
- *The Dying Swan*, a solo choreographed in 1905 by Mikhail Fokine that became the signature work for iconic ballerina Anna Pavlova;
- *Love Games*, a contemporary work by Monique Haley, longtime performer with the acclaimed River North Chicago Dance Company, who said it was inspired by "the flirty tug-of-war we play when we are falling for someone";
- *Perpetuum Mobile*, a solo work for a male dancer by Florida-based choreographer Jeff Satinoff.

*Momentum* is sponsored by Mutual of Omaha. Additional support is provided by the Iowa West Foundation; the Nebraska Arts Council; the Nebraska Cultural Endowment; the Lincoln Financial Foundation; James and Rebecca Liu; and John Ritland and Greta Vaught.

Tickets are available from Ticket Omaha, (402) 345-0606, or online at [ticketomaha.com](http://ticketomaha.com). More information about Ballet Nebraska is available from the company's website at [balletnebraska.org](http://balletnebraska.org).

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*Cleopatra:* Sasha York and Natasha Grimm

*DanceSport:* Angela Zolczynski, Sasha York, Kelsey Schwenker, Matthew Carter



*Love Games* (above and right): Erin Alarcón



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## **ABOUT BALLET NEBRASKA:**

Ballet Nebraska is the state's professional dance company — the only arts organization of its kind in the region. Performing at home and on tour, its mission is to enrich Nebraska and Iowa communities through programs of the highest quality: professional dance performances, educational programs, and community outreach. Ballet Nebraska's talented professional dancers hail from around the United States abroad, making Omaha their home to share the excitement of dance with others. As expressive artists, powerful athletes, and skilled teachers, Ballet Nebraska's dancers give the company a key role in the cultural vitality of the region.

## **ABOUT MOMENTUM:**

*Momentum* is Ballet Nebraska's annual *mixed-repertory* production -- a program of short, individual ballets of varied styles. Pioneered in the early 1900s by Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes de Montecarlo, the mixed-repertory format is an alternative to the style of ballet program consisting of a single work, such as Ballet Nebraska's 2011-12 productions of *Dracula* and *The Nutcracker*.

## **MOMENTUM ON TOUR:**

In addition to its Omaha production, Ballet Nebraska will perform *Momentum* on tour Sunday, April 1, at 7:30 pm at the Hevelone Center in Beatrice. The production is sponsored by the Beatrice Area Arts Council.

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### GUEST CHOREOGRAPHERS FOR *MOMENTUM*, MARCH 2012

**Note to assignment editors:** *Two of our guest choreographers will be in Omaha to work with the company during March: Harrison McEldowney March 9-11, and Jeff Satinoff March 23-25. These working rehearsals can provide an interesting opportunity for behind-the-scenes feature, photo or video coverage. If you'd like to arrange to attend a rehearsal, or schedule an in-person interview with either guest choreographer, please contact Erika at (402) 541-6946.*

**Monique Haley** graduated from the prestigious University of the Arts in Philadelphia, where Frank Chaves – artistic director of River North Chicago Dance Company – discovered her in a master class. After being invited to Chicago to train and perform as an apprentice, Haley danced for nine seasons with the nationally-renowned company.

Her choreographic debut work *Uhuru* (Swahili for “freedom”) opened to glowing reviews on Valentine’s Day weekend 2009 at Millennium Park’s Harris Theater of Music and Dance. Inspired by 24 years of dance, Haley said, she found that “River North Chicago was a really good home ground for my first big project.”

*Love Games* — an original work created by Haley specifically for Ballet Nebraska – is a lively new contemporary work, performed to upbeat drum music. It is “the flirty tug of war we play when we are falling for someone,” Haley explains.

In addition to having trained with Philadanco, Haley is also a former member of Bermuda Dance Company and the Eleone Dance Theatre of Philadelphia. An accomplished instructor, she has taught with Universal Dance Association and has also instructed workshops for Dance Theatre of Harlem and Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago.

**Harrison McEldowney** returns for Ballet Nebraska’s second season, bringing along his brilliant *DanceSport*, a wonderful and witty satire about what happens when professional sports meets professional dance – complete with hilarious play-by-play color commentary.

McEldowney has choreographed for Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Hubbard Street 2, River North Dance Company, the Civic Ballet of Chicago, the Cerqua/Rivera Art Experience, Ballet Met, American Repertory Ballet, Louisville Ballet, Chicago Shakespeare Repertory, and he was resident choreographer for Configurations Dance Company.

The inaugural recipient of the Prince Prize award, McEldowney has also received choreography awards from Ruth Page Center for the Arts, After Dark, and Choo-San Goh. Other choreographic achievements include the opening work of the 10th Anniversary of Dance for Life, the finale of Dance Chicago’s 10th Anniversary, the 35th anniversary tour of American Bandstand, directing the Australian tour of *More Dirty Dancing*, the ‘92 Barcelona Olympics’ Closing Ceremonies, and Carnegie Hall’s Celebration of 125 Years of Musical Theater. McEldowney also directs shows for Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines including *Freedom of the Seas*, the world’s largest cruise ship.

In addition to stage, McEldowney also choreographs for film and television. In 2008, the documentary *Billy Sunday*, which featured McEldowney, was nominated for an Emmy Award.

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**Jeff Satinoff** says of his solo work, *Perpetuum Mobile*: "I loved the music and wanted the movement that I made for it to reflect its sensibility on stage. The story is the movement language that I made for it."

Satinoff made his professional dance debut at age 13 as the Young Prince in San Francisco Ballet's production of *The Nutcracker*, later using his salary of \$5 per performance to purchase a new bike. Satinoff went on to train with Pennsylvania Ballet, San Francisco Ballet and North Carolina School of the Arts. He danced principal roles with the then-newly formed North Carolina Dance Theatre in numerous classical ballets as well as works by renowned choreographers Agnes De Mille and Alvin Ailey. In 1974, Satinoff joined the newly formed Eliot Feld Ballet, where he danced for ten years as a principal dancer in *Harbinger* and *Intermezzo*, among others, and created roles in many of Feld's ballets. Satinoff taught company class and took part in the beginnings of Feld's own New Ballet School.

Satinoff served as Artistic Director at both Dancesouth in Charleston, South Carolina, and Lake Erie Ballet in Erie, Pennsylvania.

A prolific choreographer, Satinoff has created more than 40 ballets for dance companies and schools across the U.S. including School of American Ballet, Juilliard Dance Ensemble, Hartford Ballet, Ballet Hispanico, Dayton Ballet, Ballet Memphis and Los Angeles Dance Alliance among others.

Satinoff was named Dean of Dance at the A.W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts, where he has remained on staff since 1994. Recent works include a new version of *Carmina Burana*, a restaging of his own *L'Histoire Du Soldat* at Florida Atlantic University, and the restaging of Feld's *Harbinger* on Dreyfoos.

Satinoff is the 2011 recipient of the leadership award for Arts Education Professional from the Florida Alliance for Arts Education.

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## PROGRAM NOTES FOR *MOMENTUM*, MARCH 2012

***Cleopatra*:** Erika Overturff's new ballet gives a dramatic glimpse into the life of one of history's most compelling and intriguing personalities: Cleopatra, the last ruler of classical Egypt. Famous both for her beauty and her political adeptness, this central figure in a star-crossed clash of empires makes a fascinating subject for Overturff's interpretive skill. This work, part of an ongoing collaboration between Ballet Nebraska and Omaha's Joslyn Art Museum, was inspired by Joslyn's exquisite touring exhibition *To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum* (on view through June 10, 2012).

***DanceSport*:** Created by nationally-renowned choreographer and showman Harrison McEldowney, *DanceSport* is a riotously witty look at the intersection between competitive sports and professional dance, complete with hilarious play-by-play commentary!

***Bacchanale Variations*:** Matthew Carter's *Bacchanale Variations* is a work for four women, danced on pointe to the music of Charles Gounod. "It is all about beautiful music, glamorous ballet dancers and virtuoso dancing," said Carter. Mr. Carter serves as ballet master and company dancer for Ballet Nebraska.

***The Dying Swan*:** This poignant solo was created for the iconic ballerina Anna Pavlova by Mikhail Fokine, the first great ballet choreographer of the 20th Century. Set to Camille Saint-Saëns' cello solo *Le Cygne* from his *Carnival of the Animals*, it was first presented in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1905, and became Pavlova's signature dance; she went on to perform it some 4,000 times.

***Love Games*:** This lively new contemporary work is performed to upbeat drum music and was created for the company by Monique Haley in December. Ms. Haley described it as "the flirty tug of war we play when we are falling for someone." Originally from Washington D.C., Ms. Haley performed for nine seasons with the nationally acclaimed River North Chicago Dance Company.

***Perpetuum Mobile*:** Jeff Satinoff's *Perpetuum Mobile* is a solo for a male dancer. "I loved the music and wanted the movement that I made for it to reflect its sensibility on stage," said Satinoff. "The story is the movement language that I made for it." A prolific choreographer, Mr. Satinoff has created more than 40 ballets for dance companies and schools across the U.S.

***Americano*:** Erika Overturff's light-hearted retro duet is performed to the Neapolitan song *Tu vuoi fare l'americano*. Written in the 1950s, the song blends swing and jazz styles in a tale of a young Italian man who dreams of living the way he thinks Americans live: drinking whiskey and soda, smoking Camels, dancing to rock 'n' roll, and playing baseball. The duet features Ballet Nebraska's own Italian dancer, Alberto Liberatoscioli.



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### BALLET NEBRASKA 2011-12 COMPANY BIOS

#### Erika Overturff

Artistic Director & Founder (Artist Sponsor: [Midlands Choice](#))



Erika Overturff is the founder and artistic director of Ballet Nebraska. Erika began her training in Iowa at the Academy of Ballet, continuing her studies at summer programs including North Carolina School of the Arts, American Ballet Theater, Pittsburgh Ballet Theater, and the Kirov Academy. Erika earned her BFA in ballet performance and teaching from the University of Utah, which she attended on a full scholarship. She graduated cum laude in just three years and was chosen outstanding senior by the ballet department faculty.

Erika went on to dance with Montgomery Ballet, Alabama Ballet, and Omaha Theater Ballet. She has performed principal and soloist roles in a wide range of classical and contemporary repertoire. Erika has also been a faculty member and guest teacher for schools throughout the United States.

As a choreographer, Erika has received critical praise for her work. She served as répétitrice for Montgomery Ballet and resident choreographer for Omaha Theater Ballet. As part of Ballet Nebraska's collaboration with Joslyn Art Museum for *Momentum*, she recently choreographed the ballet *Connemara* and is creating a new ballet *Cleopatra*. Additionally, Erika created Ballet Nebraska's lively and entertaining new version of the holiday favorite *The Nutcracker*, which debuted to Omaha-area audiences in December 2011.

#### Matthew Carter

Ballet Master (Artist Sponsor: John & Gayla Thal)



Matthew Carter began his training with Sharon Filone at the Lake Erie Ballet School and Sandra Barnett at Little's Dance Studio. He went on to study on scholarship at North Carolina School of the Arts, Miami City Ballet School, and the Chautauqua Festival Dancers. Matthew has danced professionally with Ohio Ballet, Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, Lake Erie Ballet, and Omaha Theater Ballet. He has also performed as a Guest Artist with Hawaii Ballet Theatre, Neglia Ballet Artists, and Ballet Tucson. Matthew has been choreographing since the age of 16 and has premiered works with numerous schools, professional companies, and theaters. He is the co-director of Motion41 Dance in Omaha and continues to serve as a guest teacher for schools throughout the country. Matthew returns for his second season at Ballet Nebraska as ballet master.

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### Erin Alarcón

Company Dancer



A native of New Jersey, Erin Alarcón received her dance training under Christine Taylor and Luba Gulyaeva of New Jersey Civic Youth Ballet, where she performed a number of classic roles and contemporary works. Erin earned her Bachelor of Arts in dance performance at Mercyhurst College under the direction of Tauna Hunter. During the summers, she studied with Eglevsky Ballet and The Joffrey Ballet. She has worked with a number of guest artists including Laura Alonso, Bruce Marks, Vivi Flindt, and Bill Evans. Erin has also studied abroad with Valerie Valentine of the Dutch National Ballet. Erin previously danced professionally with SoMar Dance Works and Ballet Concerto. She performed leading roles in both *Giselle* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, as well as solo roles in Ballet Nebraska's *Momentum* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Erin is returning for her second season with Ballet Nebraska.

### Claire Goodwillie

Company Dancer



Claire Goodwillie began her ballet training at Omaha Theater Ballet School of Dance. She spent summers training with the renowned Pacific Northwest Ballet and Ballet Austin. She has also trained in Banff, Canada. Claire appeared in numerous Omaha Theater Ballet productions as both a student and apprentice, including *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Firebird* and *Coppélia*. Her favorite roles include young Clara in *The Orpheum Nutcracker*, Evil Rat Queen in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker*, as well as Helena in Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Claire was featured in the role of Sugar Plum Fairy in a Christmas production at Omaha Theater Company. She has also performed with Opera Omaha and Omaha Symphony. Claire is a founding member returning for her second season at Ballet Nebraska.

### Natasha Grimm

Company Dancer (Artist Sponsor: John Ritland & Greta Vaught)



Natasha Grimm began her ballet training at Omaha Theater Ballet School of Dance. She also received a scholarship to Kansas City Ballet, and toured with Manhattan Dance. Additionally, Natasha danced in productions with Omaha Symphony and Opera Omaha. Natasha began her professional career at Omaha Theater Ballet where she danced first as an apprentice, and later as a company member for three seasons. She was dubbed by Examiner.com as "one of the most lithe and physically appealing dancers to grace the stage" in her role of Coral Snake in Omaha Theater Ballet's final production, *The Rainforest*. A founding member of Ballet Nebraska, Natasha has performed lead roles, including Sugar Plum Fairy in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker* and Titania in Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Natasha returns for her second season with Ballet Nebraska. [More about Natasha...](#)



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### Alberto Liberatoscioli

Company Dancer (Artist Sponsor: Clyde & Deborah Overturff)



Originally from Italy, Alberto Liberatoscioli received his ballet training in the Vaganova and Balanchine styles, also studying modern dance. He was a member of National Theater in Brno, Czech Republic and Slovak National Ballet where he performed in classical repertory including *Le Corsaire*, *La Bayadère* and *Swan Lake*, as well as neoclassical works and opera premieres. Alberto also danced with Columbia Classical Ballet in South Carolina, and later Omaha Theater Ballet. He appeared as a guest artist at Boulder Ballet, Ballet Fantastique and Lincoln Midwest Ballet dancing lead roles in *The Nutcracker*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and as Lando in *As You Like It*. Alberto received his teaching certification from American Ballet Theater in New York City and has taught master classes in Rome. He has also taught dance to students in Omaha and Lincoln. Alberto holds a law degree and a masters in Human Resources. He recently won first prize in the 2010 Una Manciatà di Lettere literature contest in Taranto, Italy for his book *Ombre alla Ribalta*. Most recently, Alberto performed solo roles in *Momentum*, *The Nutcracker* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Ballet Nebraska, where he is a founding member returning for his second season.

### Bret Samson

Company Dancer (Artist Sponsor: Dr. James Liu & Rebecca Liu-Huang)



Bret Samson began her dance training at Lake Shore Dance with Amy Aichele and Gwen Agee in Saukville, Wisconsin. She continued training with Melissa Anderson and Rafael Delgado in Milwaukee, where she later became a founding member of their performance group. Bret continued to complete her training at Steps on Broadway in New York City. Bret has performed in numerous ballets by accomplished choreographers, dancing roles in Harrison McEldowney's *Swing*, *Swing*, *Swing!* and Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as well as works by Kenneth Oberly and Jean-Paul Commin. Bret has performed with Milwaukee Ballet II, Madison Ballet and Omaha Theater Ballet. A founding member of Ballet Nebraska, Bret returns for her second season.

### Kelsey Schwenker

Company Dancer



Boulder, Colorado native Kelsey Schwenker began her classical ballet training with Ballet Nouveau Colorado, where she was a five-year member of its student company directed by Julia Wilkinson Manley. She has attended summer intensives with Kansas City Ballet, Brooklyn Ballet Theatre, Boulder Jazz Dance Workshop and Paul Taylor Dance Company. Kelsey received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in ballet performance, graduating summa cum laude from the University of Oklahoma, where she trained with Mary Margaret Holt, Donn Edwards, Steve Brule and Jeremy Lindberg. Kelsey has performed in notable works including *Rodeo*, *Divertimento No. 5*, *The Firebird*, *Afternoon of a Faun* and *Les Biches*. Kelsey returns for her second season with Ballet Nebraska. [More about Kelsey...](#)

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### Denis Vezetiu

Company Dancer



Born in Moldova in Eastern Europe, Denis Vezetiu received his professional training at the Academy of Ballet of Moldova. He went on to dance with a number of prestigious companies. He danced as a soloist with the National Opera of Bucharest and the National Theatre of Moldova. As a dancer with Chisinau National Theatre, Denis toured extensively in Europe and the United States. His varied repertoire includes *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Coppélia*, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, *Le Corsaire* and *La Bayadère*. Since 2008, Denis served as a principal dancer with Manassas Ballet in Virginia, performing leading roles in a variety of classical and original ballets. This is his first season with Ballet Nebraska.

### Sasha York

Company Dancer (Artist Sponsor: [OrthoWest](#))



Originally from Chelyabinsk, Russia, Sasha York trained at Paavola School of Dance in Flint, Michigan. He later returned to Russia, where he trained with Urey Urivich. Sasha was accepted into the pre-professional program at Pittsburgh Ballet Theater, where he performed in company productions of *Don Quixote*, *The Nutcracker*, *Peter Pan*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. He has worked with many well-known choreographers such as Harrison McEldowney, Viktor Plotnikov and Septime Webre. Sasha performed the lead role in McEldowney's *Swing, Swing, Swing!*, Snow King in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker*, and Oberon in Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He previously danced for two seasons at Omaha Theater Ballet. Sasha joined Ballet Nebraska in 2010 as a founding member and returns for his second season. [More about Sasha...](#)

### Angela Zolczynski

Company Dancer (Artist Sponsor: J. Michael Hemmer)



A native of Rapid City, South Dakota, Angela Zolczynski is a graduate of the prestigious Walnut Hill School for the Arts in Natick, Massachusetts. She received her ballet training from Michael Owen of American Ballet Theater. Angela performed with Omaha Theater Ballet for six seasons, dancing in numerous works including *The Firebird*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Coppélia*. Angela has performed many soloist roles, including her recent portrayal of Hermia in Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A dedicated instructor, Angela has taught ballet, jazz, and tap in Omaha for seven years, and she also currently leads youth rehearsals for Repertory Ensemble. Angela is a founding member of Ballet Nebraska returning for her second season.

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### **Teresa Coulter**

Apprentice



Teresa began her dance training at Mary Lorraine's Dance Center in Omaha. She also trained at Omaha Academy of Ballet and Motion41 Dance. Teresa spent summers training with Kansas City Ballet, the prestigious North Carolina School of the Arts, and Kaatsbaan International Dance in Tivoli, New York. Teresa was a founding member of Ballet Nebraska II in the Company's debut season. She has danced company roles as Miss May in the Calendar Girls scene in Harrison McElDowney's *Swing, Swing, Swing!* and in the flower corps during Waltz of the Flowers in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker*. Teresa joins Ballet Nebraska this season as a first-year apprentice.

### **Mandy Lock**

Apprentice



Mandy is a recent graduate of the University of Utah where she earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in ballet performance. She began her training in classical ballet and acro-gymnastics in her home state of Missouri. She was a member of resident performing companies Utah Ballet and Character Dance Ensemble. Mandy also appeared professionally as a guest artist with Aspen Santa Fe Ballet in 2008. Mandy has toured internationally in Japan and Costa Rica, as well as extensively throughout the state of Utah. She has performed in a range of classical repertory including, *Swan Lake*, *Cinderella*, *La Bayadère*, *Giselle* and *The Firebird*, as well as numerous contemporary works. Mandy joins Ballet Nebraska this season as an apprentice.

### **Andrea Mason**

Apprentice



Chesterfield, Missouri native Andrea received her classical ballet training at St. Louis Ballet School with Gen Horiuchi and Ellen Costanza. She performed as a student apprentice in numerous roles in *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker* with St. Louis Ballet. Andrea received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance, with a dual emphasis in ballet and modern from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance in May 2011. Andrea appeared in Anthony Tudor's *Dark Elegies*, Bernard Gaddis's *Deitas* as a principal, as well as *Les Petits Riens* by Gen Horiuchi, *Shostakovich Jazz Suite* by Ron Tice, and *Untitled* by Thaddeus Davis. During summers, she studied with Nashville Ballet, Carolina Ballet, Kansas City Ballet, Ballet Chicago and St. Louis Ballet. Andrea appeared professionally in 2010 as guest artist for Dimensions Dance Theater as Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*. She also taught advanced classical ballet for two years at Creative Arts Academy. This is Andrea's first year as an apprentice with Ballet Nebraska.