

# Ballet

N E B R A S K A

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 8, 2012

Contact: Erika Overturff, (402) 541-6946

**Print-quality photos available for download from:** [BN 'Nutcracker' master collection](#)

### **HUGE PRODUCTION BRINGS BALLET NEBRASKA'S *THE NUTCRACKER* TO THREE COMMUNITIES**

OMAHA -- Twenty professional dancers... fifteen pre-professional dancers... more than 200 community performers... and several truckloads of scenery and costumes: That's what it takes to bring Ballet Nebraska's *The Nutcracker* to the three communities where it will play this holiday season.

"It's like putting on the biggest Christmas party you've ever imagined," said Ballet Nebraska artistic director Erika Overturff, who not only directs the production but dances featured roles in every performance. "As one example, there are 230 costumes. Every one of them has multiple parts -- tights, shoes, jewelry, headpieces, wigs, accessories -- and they all have to be on the right dancer in the right place at the right time. We all work really hard to achieve that, but sometimes it still seems as if it must be magic!"

*The Nutcracker* will feature the familiar characters and beautiful Tchaikovsky score that make the ballet a holiday tradition, Overturff said. Many of the company's professional dancers are cast in new roles this year, giving them a chance to put a fresh artistic stamp on their characters, she said.

One of the changes involves Overturff herself: for the first time, she and Natasha Grimm will take turns alternating between the roles of the regal Sugar Plum Fairy and the evil Rat Queen.

"During our first Rat Queen rehearsal, Tasha and I kept saying 'this is so fun!'" Overturff said. "The role of Sugar Plum takes a lot of control. For Rat Queen you can just let all of your energy fly, the bigger the better. And being 'evil' is always fun. All of the Ballet Nebraska dancers are sweethearts in real life -- but we love exploring the wicked side."

Ballet Nebraska's performances of *The Nutcracker* will be Friday, November 30, at 7:30 pm at the IWCC Arts Center in Council Bluffs, and Sunday, December 2, at 2 pm at the Omaha Music Hall.

Two weeks later, the company will take the production on tour to Spirit Lake, Iowa, performing at 7 pm on Friday, December 14, and at 2 pm on Saturday, December 15, at the Sami Bedell Center for Performing Arts.

Ticket information for the IWCC performance is available from the IWCC Arts Center box office at (712) 388-7140. Information for the Omaha Music Hall performance is available from TicketMaster, (800) 745-3000, or online at [ticketmaster.com](#). Ticket information for the Spirit Lake tour performances is available online from [samicenter.tix.com](#).

*The Nutcracker* is presented with the support of the Iowa West Foundation and Douglas County. More information about Ballet Nebraska is available from the company's website at [balletnebraska.org](#).

##

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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 THE NUTCRACKER:**

Choreographer Erika Overturff created Ballet Nebraska's version of *The Nutcracker* for performances in December 2010 at the Sami Bedell Center for the Performing Arts in Spirit Lake, Iowa, where it drew the largest crowds ever recorded since the center's opening. This year, Ballet Nebraska will stage the production in three locations: at the IWCC Arts Center in Council Bluffs on November 30; the Omaha Music Hall on December 2; and in a return engagement in Spirit Lake on December 14 and 15. Ballet Nebraska also will involve young audiences in the *Nutcracker* experience by presenting condensed daytime performances for schools; offering in-school outreach workshops; and giving more than 200 young community participants the chance to perform onstage alongside the company's professional dancers.

## **NUTCRACKER HISTORY:**

Although there is no single authoritative version of *The Nutcracker*, all the productions performed today are descended from a version first staged in December 1892 by Russia's Imperial Ballet. Its artistic director, Marius Petipa, devised a plot based on a short story by E.T.A. Hoffmann; his assistant, Lev Ivanov, did most of the choreography, to a score composed by Piotr Tchaikovsky.

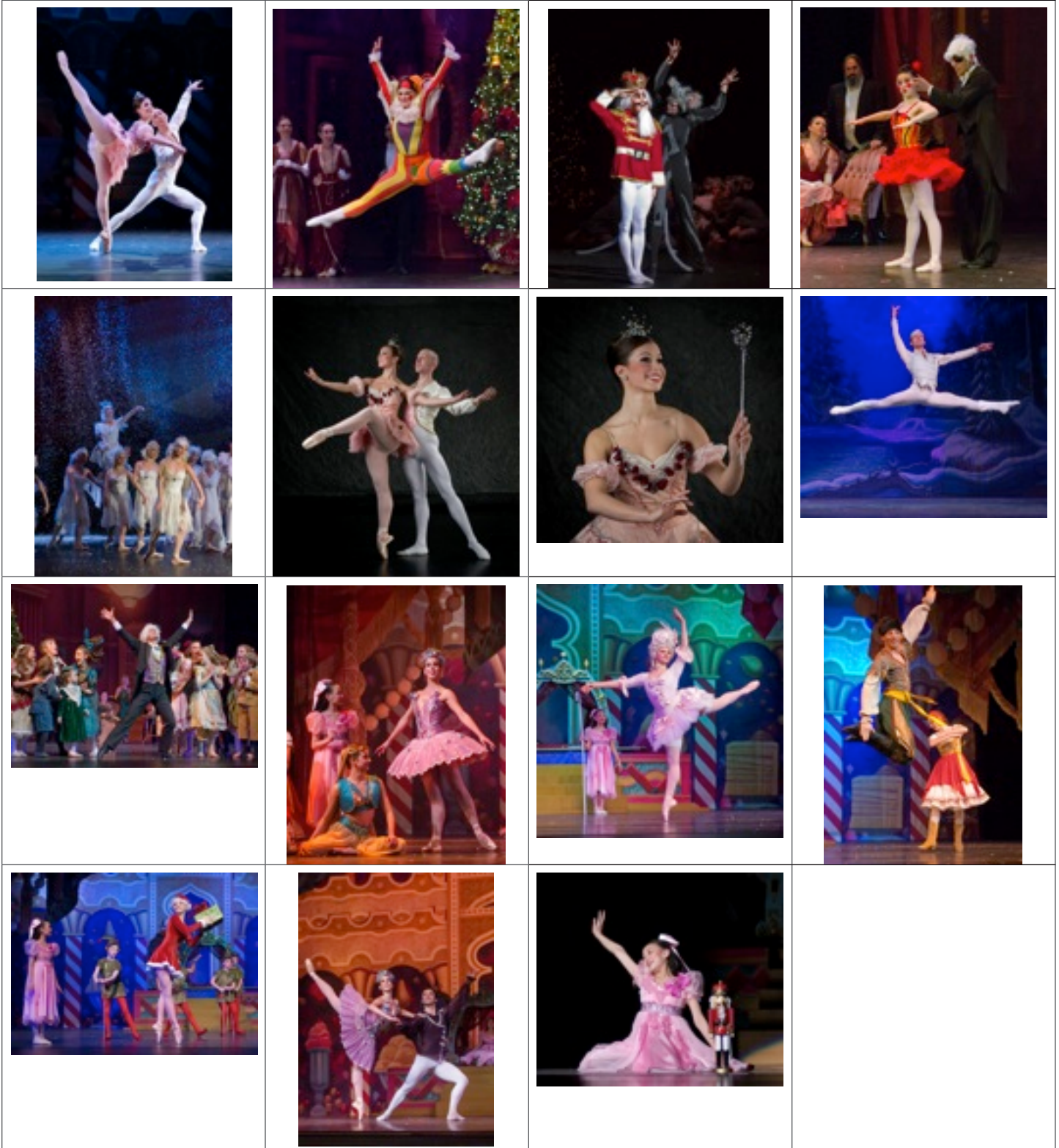
Although not a failure, as sometimes claimed, *The Nutcracker* was overshadowed by other Petipa/Ivanov/Tchaikovsky works such as *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. It was not performed outside of Russia until 1934, when the Sadler's Wells Ballet staged a shortened version in London; the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo introduced it to America in 1940.

The San Francisco Ballet helped launch *The Nutcracker* as a Christmas tradition when it staged America's first full-length version in 1944, and productions by the New York City Ballet beginning in 1954 popularized it further. Today it is generally regarded as the world's most widely-performed classical ballet, and its score is among Tchaikovsky's best-known works.

# Ballet

NEBRASKA

**Note to Editors:** The following photos are available as fully-captioned, high-resolution downloads from [BN 'Nutcracker' master collection](#)



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## BALLET NEBRASKA 2012-13 COMPANY BIOS

### Erika Overturff

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



Erika Overturff is the founder and artistic director of Ballet Nebraska, the state's professional ballet company. Under her leadership, Ballet Nebraska enriches the region through an exciting array of professional dance performances and a strong commitment to cultural education and community outreach programming.

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 Theatre, Pittsburgh Ballet Theater, and the Kirov Academy. Erika earned her B.F.A. 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. She is currently working on several collaborations with Opera Omaha and regularly creates new works for Ballet Nebraska. As part of the company's ongoing collaboration with Joslyn Art Museum for *Momentum*, Erika has choreographed original ballets inspired by museum artwork or exhibitions, including *Connemara* and *Cleopatra*. She also created Ballet Nebraska's lively and entertaining version of the holiday favorite *The Nutcracker*, which has drawn enthusiastic audiences both at home and on tour.

# Ballet

N E B R A S K A

## Matthew Carter

Ballet Master (Artist Sponsor: RSVP Nebraska)



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 third season as Ballet Nebraska's ballet master.

## 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 B.A. 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 has danced professionally with SoMar Dance Works and Ballet Concert, and has appeared as a guest artist with Iowa Dance Theater. She has performed leading roles in *Giselle*, *Cinderella* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, as well as many soloist roles with Ballet Nebraska including Mikhail Fokine's *The Dying Swan*, Fee in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Dew Drop Fairy in *The Nutcracker*. This is Erin's third 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*, Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and a vampire bride in *Dracula*. She has also performed with Opera Omaha and Omaha Symphony. Claire returns for her third season with Ballet Nebraska.

# Ballet

N E B R A S K A

## Natasha Grimm

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



A founding member of Ballet Nebraska, Natasha Grimm has performed leading roles including Sugar Plum Fairy in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker*, Titania in Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mina in Winthrop Corey's *Dracula*, and the title role in Overturff's *Cleopatra*. Natasha 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. Natasha returns for her third season with Ballet Nebraska.

## Alberto Liberatoscioli

Company Dancer



Originally from Italy, Alberto Liberatoscioli received his ballet training in the Vaganova and Balanchine styles while 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 operas. 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, Lincoln Midwest Ballet and Iowa Dance Theater, dancing lead roles in *The Nutcracker*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *As You Like It* and *Cinderella*. Alberto received his teaching certification from American Ballet Theater in New York City and has taught master classes in Rome. He also teaches students in Omaha and Lincoln. Alberto holds a law degree and a masters in Human Resources. He is the recipient of an Una Manciatà di Lettere literary award for his book *Ombre alla Ribalta*. With Ballet Nebraska, Alberto has been featured in many roles including Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Russian lead in *The Nutcracker*. Alberto is returning for his third season with the company.

# Ballet

N E B R A S K A

## **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 her training at Steps on Broadway in New York City. She has previously performed with Milwaukee Ballet II, Madison Ballet and Omaha Theater Ballet. Bret has enjoyed performing in works by a variety of choreographers, including Harrison McEldowney, Oskar Antunez, Winthrop Corey, Kennet Oberly, and Jean-Paul Commélin. She was recently featured as a soloist in Mikhail Fokine's classic *The Dying Swan* during Ballet Nebraska's *Momentum*. Bret is also the rehearsal director for Repertory Ensemble, Ballet Nebraska's youth performance group. A founding member of Ballet Nebraska, Bret is in her third season with the company.

## **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 trained summers with Kansas City Ballet, Brooklyn Ballet Theatre, Boulder Jazz Dance Workshop and Paul Taylor Dance Company. Kelsey received her BFA 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*. She has performed featured roles in Ballet Nebraska's productions of *Swing*, *Swing*, *Swing!*, *The Nutcracker*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Dracula* and *Momentum* - including Matthew Carter's classical work *Bacchanale Variations*. Kelsey returns for her third season with Ballet Nebraska.

## **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 has performed 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. Denis also performed as a principal dancer with Manassas Ballet in Virginia. His varied repertoire includes *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Coppélia*, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, *Le Corsaire* and *La Bayadère*. At Ballet Nebraska, Denis has performed as Cavalier in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker* and the soloist in Jeff Satinoff's *Perpetuum Mobile* in *Momentum*. Denis returns for his second season with Ballet Nebraska.

# Ballet

N E B R A S K A

## 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. With Ballet Nebraska, Sasha has performed as Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Marc Antony in *Cleopatra*, the title role in *Dracula*, Claude in *Swing, Swing, Swing!*, and Snow King in *The Nutcracker*. He previously danced for two seasons at Omaha Theater Ballet. Sasha returns to Ballet Nebraska for his third season.

## Apprentices

### Teresa Coulter



Teresa began her dance training at Mary Lorraine's Dance Center in Omaha. She also trained at Omaha Academy of Ballet and Motion 41 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 performed in *The Nutcracker*, *Momentum*, *Swing, Swing, Swing!*, and was featured in Matthew Carter's *Bacchanale Variations* and Erika Overturff's *Americano*. Teresa returns for her second season as an apprentice with Ballet Nebraska.

### Genevieve DiMarco



Vivi recently graduated with honors from University of Chicago with a BS in chemistry. She danced as a trainee with Joffrey Ballet under artistic director Ashley Wheater and former Bolshoi Ballet dancers Alexei Kremnev and Anna Reznik. Vivi began her training in classical ballet, modern and Vaganova character dance at the School of DanceWest Ballet where she danced lead roles in *Paquita* and *The Nutcracker*. During college, she trained at Hubbard Street's Lou Conte Dance Studio and Ruth Page Center for the Arts with Birute Barodicaite and Dolores Long. Vivi danced lead roles with University Ballet of Chicago in *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, and as Lilac Fairy in *The Sleeping Beauty*. She choreographed original productions for the student company and served as head of teaching and director of the group. This is Vivi's first season as an apprentice with Ballet Nebraska.



# Ballet

N E B R A S K A

## Brittane Hughes



Brittane is a native of Champlin, Minnesota where she began dancing at Northland School of Dance. She later trained at Minnesota Dance Theatre and The Dance Institute under Lise Houlton and Gloria Govrin. A recent graduate with a BFA from the University of Utah's Department of Ballet, Brittane trained with Regina Zarhina, Maureen Laird, and Calvin Kitten. Brittane was a member of Utah Ballet, the University's regional ballet company. She performed in *The Nutcracker*, *La Vivandiere*, *La Bayadere*, *Firebird*, *Giselle* and several pieces from the University's repertoire including a selection from Val Caniparoli's ballet *Lambarena*. As a member of the university's Character Dance Ensemble, Brittane has traveled to Athens, Greece, to perform and train. This is Brittane's first season as an apprentice with Ballet Nebraska.

## Jessica Mariner



Jessica is a recent graduate of the University of Utah where she earned a BFA from the Department of Ballet. Jessica began her classical ballet training in Chicago. She has been a member of several studio companies including those of Salt Creek Ballet and Ballet Chicago. Jessica was also a member of Utah Ballet, the resident performing company of the University of Utah. Jessica has performed in numerous classical ballets including *Giselle*, *La Bayadere*, *Paquita*, and George Balanchine's *Serenade*. Jessica joins Ballet Nebraska this season as a first-year apprentice.

## Taylor Ohman



Taylor recently completed ballet and modern dance studies at University of Missouri-Kansas City, where she performed a wide range of repertory including the pas de trois from Bournonville's *La Ventana* and Anthony Tudor's *Dark Elegies*. She also performed in Todd Bolendar's *The Nutcracker* with Kansas City Ballet. Taylor trained at Classical Ballet School and Ballet North School and Company in Kansas City where she performed in Laura Rinschmidt's stagings of *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Coppélia* and *Paquita*. She spent summers training at Regional Dance America, Kansas City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre and American College Dance Festival. Taylor joins Ballet Nebraska this season as a first year apprentice.

# Ballet

N E B R A S K A

## Emma Raker



Originally from Santa Fe, New Mexico, Emma trained in classical ballet at the School of Performing Arts at the National Dance Institute of New Mexico, where she performed several leading roles created by Jefferson Baum and Russell Baker. Emma previously studied at Moving People School, Celtic de Santa Fe Irish Dance School and McTeggart School. Emma continued her studies in San Francisco at Alonzo King LINES Ballet Training Program with world renowned teachers Alonzo King, Arturo Fernandez, Maurya Kerr, Duncan Cooper, Sidra Bell and Karah Abiog. Emma has also choreographed for her peers while studying at LINES. She spent previous summers training at Saratoga Summer Dance Intensive, LINES Ballet and Hubbard Street Dance. Emma joins Ballet Nebraska for her first season as an apprentice with the company.

## Katie van der Mars



Katie is a recent graduate of the University of Utah where she received her B.F.A. in ballet performance. She began her training in classical ballet at Corvallis Academy of Ballet in Corvallis, Oregon. Katie trained during summers with Atlanta Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, and Ballet West. During her time in Salt Lake City, she performed as a 3-year member of the university's resident company, Utah Ballet, where she danced in *Giselle*, *La Bayadere*, *Paquita*, the pas de deux from *Scheherazade*, *The Nutcracker*, les Odalisques from *Le Corsaire*, *The Firebird*, Fokine's *Ruslan & Ludmilla*, and many contemporary works. Katie joins Ballet Nebraska this season as a first-year apprentice.

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N E B R A S K A

## Trainees

### **Bridget Carpenter**



Purchase College, State University of New York (SUNY Purchase), BFA in dance  
Pacific Festival Ballet, Agoura Hills, CA .

### **Danielle Pite**



Smith College, Northampton, MA - double major in dance and chemistry  
Boulder Ballet School of Dance, Boulder, CO

### **Craigie-Lorae Wallace**



Patel Conservatory under the direction of Peter Stark, Tampa, FL  
The Dance Center, Brandon, FL  
Firethorne School of Dance, Tampa, FL

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