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TRADITION AND INNOVATION MEET IN BALLET NEBRASKA'S SEASON 4

OMAHA -- A wicked queen, a holiday hero, and some real party animals are among the characters dancegoers will meet in Ballet Nebraska's upcoming Season 4, announced to the public this week.

"The thing our audiences love most about ballet is its variety," said Erika Overturff, the company's founder and artistic director. "It's elegantly classical, dazzlingly athletic, and a visually rich way to tell an exciting story. For our new mainstage season, I've chosen works that highlight all those strengths.

"And separately from the mainstage season, we'll be introducing a new concept – the Encore Series – that will give audiences a more intimate and more interactive way to experience a ballet performance."

Programs announced for the mainstage season are –

Snow White, September 28 and 29 at the Rose Theater: Winthrop Corey, whose *Dracula* opened Ballet Nebraska's second season, will return as guest choreographer to stage this classic fairytale. At its March premiere with the Mobile Ballet, critic Tamara Ikenberg called Corey's *Snow White* "a visual delight with real emotional resonance... tasteful, elegant and true to the original story."

"Winthrop's ballets are amazing because he's both a choreographer and a designer," Overturff said. "He has an incredible ability to combine visual art with dramatic, beautiful movement."

The Nutcracker, November 23 at Council Bluffs' IWCC Arts Center and December 7 and 8 at Omaha's Orpheum Theater: After two seasons at the Omaha Music Hall, Overturff's lively version of the holiday ballet will make its debut appearance at the Orpheum.

"We're thrilled to be moving to the Orpheum because it's such a warm, beautiful venue for this family tradition," Overturff said. "And we're happy to continue giving our Iowa audiences a chance to enjoy *The Nutcracker* in their own home theater, the IWCC Arts Center.

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Momentum, featuring *Party Animals*, May 2 at Joslyn Art Museum and May 4 at the IWCC Arts Center: Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo inspired Overturff to choreograph *Party Animals* as her contribution to this season's *Momentum*, Ballet Nebraska's annual mixed-repertory program of short ballets in a variety of styles. "The ballet features a parade of animals from the African savanna. They each have such interesting characteristics, I couldn't help seeing them as personalities," she said. "When I started listening to '60s music, it all came together. I envision my sophisticated 'party animals' all dressed up for a wild night out on the town."

Matthew Carter, Ballet Nebraska's ballet master, also will create a new work for *Momentum*, Overturff said. Part of the ballet company's ongoing collaboration with Joslyn Art Museum, the new ballet – untitled so far – will draw its inspiration from Joslyn's featured spring 2014 exhibit, *Poseidon and the Sea: Myth, Cult and Daily Life*.

All three productions will include special school performances for area students, she said.

Details are still in development for Ballet Nebraska's new Encore Series, Overturff said, but the series' concept and structure already are clear.

"What our most passionate fans have been telling me," she said, "is that they want more: more chances to see innovative works, more interaction with the artists, more chances to meet and mingle with other dance enthusiasts. We're developing the Encore Series specifically around those goals."

She said each Encore Series event will feature a short performance of about 45 minutes, a "talkback" session between artists and audience, and an opportunity to socialize over light refreshments. Two performances already are on the series schedule: **Duets** on February 8, and **New Works**, featuring choreography by Ballet Nebraska dancers, on March 29.

Overturff said she could not yet reveal the Encore Series' location: a new West Omaha venue that its organizers plan to announce soon.

"It will be a versatile, mixed-use performance space," she said. "It will be perfect for a smaller, more intimate, more interactive production such as the Encore Series."

Ballet Nebraska is the region's only professional dance company. The upcoming season is supported in part thanks to a generous operating grant from the Peter Kiewit Foundation. Information about Ballet Nebraska and about Season 4 is available from the company's website, **balletnebraska.org**.