

Ballet

N E B R A S K A

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 30, 2013

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Contact: Erika Overturff, (402) 541-6946

BALLET NEBRASKA SETS "BLISTERING" PACE AS SEASON 4 BEGINS

OMAHA -- Ballet Nebraska's dancers are off to their busiest start ever as the company begins its fourth season of professional dance, founder and artistic director Erika Overturff said.

"We've been rehearsing nonstop, and some of the dancers have been bragging on Facebook about their blisters," said Overturff, who dances and choreographs for Ballet Nebraska as well as directing it. "Everybody's excited that we're having so many chances to perform, and that so many other groups want to collaborate with us."

Ballet Nebraska's season will open September 28 and 29 at the Rose Theater with *Snow White*, and dancers spent the week of August 19 learning the ballet from guest choreographer Winthrop Corey, a former principal dancer of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the National Ballet of Canada. Along with *Snow White*, dancers also are rehearsing choreography for *The Nutcracker* (November 23 at the IWCC Arts Center and December 7 and 8 at the Orpheum Theater) and *Momentum* (May 2 at Joslyn Art Museum and May 4 at the IWCC Arts Center), Overturff said.

Meanwhile, she said, Ballet Nebraska also has been working on collaborative projects that include:

- Appearances in Opera Omaha's *Carmen* November 1 and 3.
- A collaboration with Ballet Vero Beach, a new professional company starting up in Florida, which will host Ballet Nebraska on tour in April 2014. Vero Beach artistic director Adam Schnell and ballet master Camilo Rodriguez were in Omaha the week of August 26 to rehearse the company for the tour performance. Ballet Nebraska dancers Matthew Carter and Natasha Grimm Gregory were guest performers August 17 in "First Steps," a gala in Vero Beach in support of the new company.
- Omaha Creative Institute, local sponsor of the "Play Me, I'm Yours" public piano campaign. Ballet Nebraska dancers performed in the program's kickoff event on August 23 in Memorial Park.

General operating support for Ballet Nebraska is provided through generous grants from the Peter Kiewit Foundation, the Union Pacific Foundation, and the Sherwood Foundation. More information is available from the company's website at balletnebraska.org.

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BALLET NEBRASKA SEASON 4 SUMMARY

Mainstage Series

Snow White

The Rose Theater

- Saturday, September 28, at 7:30 pm
- Sunday, September 29, at 2 pm

The Nutcracker

The Arts Center at Iowa Western Community College, Council Bluffs

- Sat., November 23, at 7:30 pm

Orpheum Theater • Slosburg Hall

- Saturday, December 7, at 2 pm & 7:30 pm
- Sunday December 8, at 2 pm

Momentum, featuring Party Animals

Joslyn Art Museum • Witherspoon Concert Hall

- Friday, May 2, at 8 pm

Arts Center at IWCC

- Sunday, May 4, at 2 pm

Encore Series (at the Encore, 2819 S. 125th Ave. Suite 268 in Westwood Plaza, Omaha)

Duets

- Saturday, February 8 at 7:30 pm

New Works

- Saturday, March 29 at 7:30 pm

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BALLET NEBRASKA'S SEASON 4 COMPANY ARTISTS

Erika Overturff

Founder and Artistic Director



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 has worked 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 new version of the holiday favorite *The Nutcracker*, which has premiered to enthusiastic audiences both at home and on tour.

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Matthew Carter

Ballet Master



Matthew Carter began his training in Pennsylvania with Sharon Filone at the Lake Erie Ballet School and Sandra Barnett at Little's Dance Studio. He went on to study on full 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 performed numerous leading roles within the classical repertoire, including Prince Desire in *The Sleeping Beauty*, Franz in *Coppélia*, and Mercutio in *Romeo & Juliet*, as well as in works by George Balanchine, Merce Cunningham, Donald Byrd, Heinz Poll, Laura Dean, Luis Montero, and many others. He has also performed as a Guest Artist with Hawaii Ballet Theatre, Neglia Ballet Artists, and Ballet Tucson. Omaha audiences have enjoyed Matthew in roles such as The Asp in Erika Overturff's *Cleopatra*, The White Rabbit in Kennet Oberly's *Alice In Wonderland*, and Puck in Oscar Antunez's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Also a choreographer, he has premiered works with numerous schools and professional companies, including *Bacchanale Variations*, *Signs of Life*, and *Sadako* for Ballet Nebraska. Matthew 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 fourth season as 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. Erin earned her B.A. in dance performance at Mercyhurst College under the direction of Tauna Hunter. During summers she studied with Eglevsky Ballet and Joffrey Ballet. She has worked with a number of guest artists including Laura Alonso, Bruce Marks, Vivi Flindt, and Bill Evans. Erin has studied abroad with Valerie Valentine of the Dutch National Ballet, danced professionally with SoMar Dance Works and Ballet Concert, and has appeared as a guest artist with Iowa Dance Theater. She has performed the title roles in *Giselle*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Cinderella*. With Ballet Nebraska, she has been featured in Mikhail Fokine's *The Dying Swan*, as Fee in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and in lead roles in *The Nutcracker* and *Alice in Wonderland*. This is Erin's fourth season with the company.

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Ryan Christopher

Company Dancer



Ryan Christopher grew up in Colorado playing baseball and football through high school. He received his classical ballet training at International Youth Ballet on a full scholarship under the tutelage of Mark Carlson and German Zamuel. Ryan also trained during summers at The Performing Arts Conservatory of Texas directed by H. Christopher Fairbank. Ryan previously danced with Denver's Ballet Ariel and Boulder Ballet where he performed soloist roles in classical repertory including *Le Corsaire*, *Les Sylphides*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Cinderella*, *The Nutcracker*, *Peter Pan*, *Giselle*, *Napoli*, *Beauty & the Beast*, *Les Patineurs*, and many neoclassical and modern works. Ryan has appeared as a guest artist throughout Colorado and around the United States. This is Ryan's first season with the company.

Vivi DiMarco

Company Dancer



Hailing from the Chicago suburbs, Vivi DiMarco trained in ballet, modern, and Vaganova character dance at the School of DanceWest Ballet under the direction of Ricardo and Regina Moyano. While attending college, she continued to train at Hubbard Street's Lou Conte Dance Studio and the Ruth Page Center for the Arts. She also directed and choreographed for University Ballet, where she danced lead roles in student productions of *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, and *The Sleeping Beauty*. Vivi was a trainee at Joffrey Ballet, performing in trainee productions of *Paquita* and Gerald Arpino's *Birthday Variations*. She graduated with honors from the University of Chicago with a B.S. in chemistry. At Ballet Nebraska, Vivi has danced Spanish lead in *The Nutcracker*, Tweedledum in *Alice in Wonderland* and several pieces in *Momentum*. Vivi returns for her second season at Ballet Nebraska.

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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 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*. With Ballet Nebraska, her featured roles include Rat Queen and Dew Drop Fairy in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker*, Red Queen in Kennet Oberly's *Alice in Wonderland*, Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, vampire bride in Winthrop Corey's *Dracula*, and geisha in Matthew Carter's *Sadako*. She has performed several times with Opera Omaha and Omaha Symphony. Claire returns for her fourth season with the company.

Natasha Grimm Gregory

Company Dancer



Iowa native and Ballet Nebraska founding member Natasha Grimm Gregory has performed many leading roles including Sugar Plum Fairy, Snow Queen and Dew Drop Fairy in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker*, Titania in Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mina in Winthrop Corey's *Dracula*, the title role in Overturff's *Cleopatra* and featured roles in *Momentum* and *Alice in Wonderland*. She made her choreographic debut with *Cycles* in Ballet Nebraska's spring 2012 production of *Momentum*. Natasha studied during summers on scholarship with Kansas City Ballet and Manhattan Dance.

Natasha has previously danced professionally with Omaha Theater Ballet and performed with Opera Omaha and Omaha Symphony. She is also a dance instructor in a variety of genres. Natasha returns for her fourth season with the company.

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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 Ballet of the 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 notable neoclassical works and operas. Alberto was also a company member at Columbia Classical Ballet in South Carolina and Omaha Theater Ballet. He was 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 is the creator and organizer of Midsummer Ballet Festival which brings U.S. ballet companies to his home city of San Benedetto del Tronto, Italy. Certified by American Ballet Theater of New York City, he is an active ballet instructor both locally and abroad. 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*. Alberto has danced many featured roles in Ballet Nebraska productions including Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Russian Lead and Drosselmeyer in *The Nutcracker*, and Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland*. Alberto returns for his fourth season with the company.

Bret Samson

Company Dancer



Bret Samson began her dance training at Lake Shore Dance with Amy Aichele and Gwen Agee in Saukville, Wisconsin, and later with Melissa Anderson and Rafael Delgado in Milwaukee. 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 performed in works by noted choreographers Harrison McEldowney, Oskar Antunez, Winthrop Corey, Kennet Oberly, and Jean-Paul Commélin. A founding member of Ballet Nebraska, Bret has danced as White Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, Arabian and Chinese leads in *The Nutcracker* and featured roles in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Momentum* including Mikhail Fokine's *The Dying Swan* and *Sadako*. She has also danced in Opera Omaha productions. This is Bret's fourth season with the company.

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Kelsey Schwenker

Company Dancer



Boulder native Kelsey Schwenker began her classical ballet training with Ballet Nouveau of Colorado, where she was a five-year member of its student company directed by Julia Wilkinson Manley. She trained during summers with Kansas City Ballet, Burklyn Ballet Theatre, Boulder Jazz Dance Workshop and Paul Taylor Dance Company. Kelsey received her B.F.A. 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*. With Ballet Nebraska, she has performed as Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* and featured roles in *Swing, Swing, Swing!*, *The Nutcracker*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Dracula* and *Momentum* – including Matthew Carter's *Bacchanale Variations* and *Sadako*. She is rehearsal director for Repertory Ensemble, the company's youth performance group. Kelsey returns for her fourth season with the company.

Katie van der Mars

Company Dancer



Katie van der Mars is a 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 pas de trois* from *Le Corsaire*, *The Firebird*, Fokine's *Ruslan & Ludmilla*, and many contemporary works. At Ballet Nebraska, Katie has danced featured roles in Kennet Oberly's *Alice in Wonderland*, Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker* and Ballet Nebraska's mixed-repertory production *Momentum*. Katie returns for her second season at Ballet Nebraska.

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Sasha York

Company Dancer



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!*, Cavalier and Snow King in *The Nutcracker*, and White Knight in *Alice in Wonderland*. He previously danced for two seasons at Omaha Theater Ballet. Sasha returns for his fourth season with the company.

Apprentices

Bridget Carpenter



Bridget graduated from Purchase College Conservatory of Dance at State University of New York with a B.F.A. in dance performance. She danced George Balanchine's *Serenade* at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival and Nacho Duato's works while in Madrid, Spain. She also performed at Association of Performing Arts Presenters dance festival in New York City. Originally from Oak Park, California, Bridget trained at California Dance Theatre where she performed several leading roles with Pacific Festival Ballet. Bridget continued her studies at notable summer dance programs including San Francisco Ballet, Miami City Ballet, North Carolina School of the Arts, State Street Ballet and Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance. She performed corps de ballet roles as a Ballet Nebraska trainee in *The Nutcracker*, *Momentum*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. Bridget returns to the company this season as a first-year apprentice.

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Jessica Mariner



Jessica is a graduate of University of Utah where she earned a B.F.A. from the department of ballet. Jessica began her classical ballet training in Chicago. She was a member of studio companies at 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*. At Ballet Nebraska, she has performed in *The Nutcracker*, *Alice in Wonderland* and several works featured in *Momentum*. Jessica returns to the company as a second-year apprentice this season.

Danielle Pite



Danielle began her classical ballet training at Boulder Ballet School. She graduated with honors from Smith College in Northampton, MA with a double major in dance and chemistry. Danielle trained during summers through Arts Umbrella at Ballet British Columbia, Alonzo King's LINES Ballet, American Repertory Ballet, Kansas City Ballet and Briansky Ballet. She performed leading roles in a variety of works with Five Colleges Dance Department, including Rodger Blum's *Sonnets of the Broken Hearted*, Merce Cunningham's *MinEvents*, Mark Morris's *Gloria*, and Megan McCool's *Interplay in G Minor*. Danielle choreographed and performed for three years with Celebrations Dance Company, the student dance company at Smith College. She performed as a trainee in Ballet Nebraska's *Momentum*, *The Nutcracker*, and was featured in Kennet Oberly's *Alice in Wonderland* as the March Hare. Danielle returns this season as a first-year apprentice.

Emma Raker



Originally from Santa Fe, 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 the Moving People School, Celtic de Santa Fe Irish Dance School and McTeggart School. Emma spent summers training at Saratoga Summer Dance Intensive, LINES Ballet and Hubbard Street Dance. She continued her studies in San Francisco at Alonzo King LINES Ballet Training Program with renowned teachers Alonzo King, Arturo Fernandez, Maurya Kerr, Duncan Cooper, Sidra Bell and Karah Abiog. Emma also choreographed for her peers while studying at LINES. She has performed in Erika Overtuff's *The Nutcracker*, Kennet Oberly's *Alice in Wonderland* and Ballet Nebraska's mixed-repertory production, *Momentum*. Emma is a second-year apprentice at Ballet Nebraska.

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Anna Swenson



Anna began her classical ballet training at Theater Ballet of Spokane, Washington, where she performed in original works by choreographers Charles Askegard, Dodie Askegard and Deidre A. Kellogg among others. She studied during summers at Walnut Hill School for the Arts, Joffrey Ballet's Jazz and Contemporary program, and School of Alberta Ballet in Calgary, Canada. Anna has appeared in local productions of touring company shows including Moscow Ballet's *The Sleeping Beauty* and Ballet Memphis' *The Nutcracker*. She joined the trainee program at School of Alberta Ballet in 2012, performing in Aram Manukyan's *The Nutcracker* and in Yukichi Hattori's *Numbers*. This is Anna's first season as an apprentice with Ballet Nebraska.

Trainee

Chloe Watson



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