

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 3, 2015

Contact: Erika Overturff (Founder and Artistic Director), 402-541-6946

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SEASON SIX IS BALLETT NEBRASKA'S BIGGEST YET

OMAHA -- Ballet Nebraska's dancers head back to the studio this week to begin work on Season Six, the company's biggest ever, its artistic director said.

"Our first work day is Tuesday, and we'll be launching straight into rehearsals," said Erika Overturff, Ballet Nebraska's founder and artistic director. "Season Six is our busiest ever in terms of the number of productions -- season, touring, and collaborations -- and that means lots of ballets to learn. It's a good thing dancers love to dance, because we're going to be dancing nonstop from Day 1!"

The season will open October 2 at the Orpheum Theater with *Cleopatra*, Overturff's drama about ancient Egypt's last queen. Fans will be able to see a preview on September 11, when Ballet Nebraska will perform excerpts on the outdoor stage at Turner Park as part of Opera Omaha's *Opera Outdoors* event.

Ballet-goers often cite *Cleopatra*'s 2012 premiere as one of Ballet Nebraska's most memorable productions, Overturff said, and staging it at the Orpheum will add to its dramatic impact. "Cleopatra is a fascinating historical figure, renowned for her beauty, intelligence, and political adeptness," she said. "Her story is both an epic clash of empires and a deeply personal drama -- an ideal showcase for ballet's ability to combine visual spectacle with intimate emotion."

A completely new version of an iconic scene will greet audiences when *The Nutcracker* returns for its holiday engagement November 22 at the Iowa Western Arts Center and December 5 and 6 at the Orpheum. What's new, Overturff said, is a complete refresh of one of the ballet's signature sections, the *Waltz of the Flowers*. "There will be visual and stylistic variety, with each dancer portraying a different flower," she said. "And this year, for the first time, I'm incorporating a male dancer, which will allow for exciting partnering sequences."

Momentum: Go West! will wrap up the season April 1 at Joslyn Art Museum and April 3 at the Iowa Western Arts Center. As always, Overturff said, it will be a "mixed-repertory" program: a sparkling mix of short ballets in a wide range of styles, highlighted by the premiere of Overturff's new ballet, *Go West!*

Overturff said her new ballet is part of Ballet Nebraska's ongoing collaboration with Joslyn, in conjunction with its upcoming featured exhibition *Go West! Art of the American Frontier from the Buffalo Bill Center of the West* [11/15/2015 through 4/17/2016.] "It's inspired by the spirit and stories of the American West," she said. "I don't want to give too much away, but you can expect cowboys, tumbleweeds, and yodels galore!"

Another ongoing collaboration, with Florida's Ballet Vero Beach, is growing this season to include four Florida tour productions, Overturff said: two at the Vero Beach Performing Arts Center (January 22-23 and April 8-9) and two at the Vero Beach Museum of Art (November 11 and February 10.)

Ballet Nebraska's continuing partnership with Opera Omaha will see its dancers onstage in the opera's October 14 and 18 production of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, Overturff said. That same weekend, she said, the company will participate in Omaha Performing Arts' *Celebrate 10* anniversary event, performing on October 16 at the Holland Center. Also at the Holland, she said, Ballet Nebraska will perform for the first time with the Omaha Symphony in the April 24 concert *Peter and the Wolf*.

"Everything that's happening in Season Six is a tribute both to Ballet Nebraska's rising reputation and to our growing support from audiences, sponsors and donors," Overturff said. "It's going to be an exciting year. Personally, I can't wait to get started!"

Season subscriptions for Ballet Nebraska's Season Six are on sale now. For information, visit balletnebraska.org/performances .



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MAJOR DONORS RETURN FOR BALLET NEBRASKA'S SEASON SIX

OMAHA -- For the second consecutive year, Omaha Steaks will be the Season Sponsor for Ballet Nebraska, the region's only resident professional dance company.

"Omaha Steaks is one of the city's signature businesses and a leading supporter of cultural activities," said Erika Overturff, Ballet Nebraska's founder and artistic director. "We see their sponsorship of our Season Six as a vote of confidence, both for Ballet Nebraska's quality and professionalism, and for the value of professional dance to the community."

Also returning as a major supporter is the Iowa West Foundation, which has contributed to Ballet Nebraska every year since its beginnings, Overturff said. "Creating a community where people have access to cultural amenities is part of the placemaking strategy of the Iowa West Foundation," said Pete Tulipana, President and CEO of the Iowa West Foundation. "The Ballet is a regional asset that is important to our area and we are pleased to support this talented and professional company."

The Peter Kiewit Foundation, Nebraska Arts Council, Nebraska Cultural Endowment, and the Douglas County Visitor Improvement Fund also have pledged support for Season Six, she said, with other donors to be added as the season progresses.

"Grants like these are key to not only helping us present top-quality dance productions to the region, but also to enriching the lives of thousands of area students and individuals through our education and outreach programs," said Overturff. "We strive to share the beauty and artistry of dance with a broad audience, and this wonderful support helps make that possible."

Ballet Nebraska's Season Six will open October 2 with a performance of Erika Overturff's spectacular dramatic ballet *Cleopatra* at Omaha's Orpheum Theater. Information about Ballet Nebraska is available from the company's website, balletnebraska.org.

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

August 3, 2015

Contact: Erika Overturff (Founder and Artistic Director), 402-541-6946

BALLET NEBRASKA SEASON SIX SUMMARY

I. Pre-season preview

- What:** Outdoor performance with Opera Omaha
- When:** Friday, September 11, 6:45 pm
- Where:** Turner Park outdoor stage, Midtown Crossing. Free admission.
- Details:** Ballet Nebraska will be guest performers at Opera Omaha's "Opera Outdoors," performing a preview of its season-opening ballet *Cleopatra*.
- Erika's take:** "We have a wonderful ongoing partnership with Opera Omaha, and this is a great way to introduce ballet to a wider audience. *Cleopatra*, with its mix of spectacle and emotion, is an ideal way to show first-time viewers what ballet can do."

II. Season opener: *Cleopatra*

- What:** Ballet Nebraska's production of *Cleopatra*, a moving tale of love, power and ambition that provides a dramatic glimpse into the life of one of history's most compelling personalities: Cleopatra, last queen of ancient Egypt.
- When:** Friday, October 2, 7:30 pm
- Where:** Omaha's Orpheum Theater
- Details:** Blending epic sweep with intensely personal drama, *Cleopatra* is an ideal showcase for ballet's ability to create a total theatrical experience.
- Erika's take:** "Ever since its premiere at Joslyn in Season Two, people have been telling me that *Cleopatra* is one of the ballets they'd most like to see again. Bringing it to the Orpheum stage will be a memorable experience. The ancient Egyptian culture is absolutely fascinating and provides a rich backdrop for this moving love story."

III. Opera collaboration: *The Barber of Seville*

- What:** Appearance in Opera Omaha's production of Rossini's comic masterpiece
- When/Where:** Wednesday, October 14, and Sunday, October 18, at Omaha's Orpheum Theater
- Details:** Ballet Nebraska dancers will take part in what Opera Omaha calls "a comedy of outrageous proportions...the barber Figaro must use every trick in the book to confound the lecherous Doctor Bartolo and bring together the charming Rosina and charismatic Count Almaviva."
- Erika's take:** "We value our relationship with Opera Omaha, and the chance to participate in this iconic opera, with its brilliant Rossini score, is a wonderful opportunity."

IV. Celebration: Omaha Performing Arts' 10th Anniversary

- What:** Ballet Nebraska helps celebrate the 10th anniversary of Omaha Performing Arts and the Holland Center with an appearance in the *Celebrate 10* anniversary event featuring Kristin Chenoweth.
- When/Where:** Friday, October 16, at the Holland Center
- Details:** Ballet Nebraska and other organizations will take part in this celebration organized by Omaha Performing Arts.
- Erika's take:** "Omaha Performing Arts is a great partner, and we're happy to help them celebrate their tenth year of programming."

V. On tour: Vero Beach, Florida

- What:** Four winter tours presented by Florida's Ballet Vero Beach
- When/Where:** November 11 and February 10 at the Vero Beach Museum of Art; January 22 & 23 and April 8 & 9 at the Vero Beach Performing Arts Center
- Details:** Ballet Nebraska continues its successful partnership with Ballet Vero Beach, which has invited the company back for four tour events this year.
- Erika's take:** "We're thrilled to help bring professional ballet to Vero Beach. These tours help broaden our dancers' artistic range by giving them the opportunity to dance a wider variety of ballets."

VI. Holiday classic: *The Nutcracker*

- What:** Ballet Nebraska's lively, entertaining version of the classic holiday ballet
- When/Where:** Saturday, November 22, 2 pm, at the Iowa Western Arts Center, Council Bluffs; Saturday, December 5, 2 and 7:30 pm, and Sunday, December 6, 2 pm, at Omaha's Orpheum Theater
- Details:** A spectacular new staging of the *Waltz of the Flowers*, one of the ballet's signature scenes, highlights this year's production of the holiday classic.
- Erika's take:** "The new *Waltz of the Flowers* will be spectacular, with more visual and stylistic variety than ever before. As always, *The Nutcracker* is a charming story and a showcase for many styles of dancing, from beautifully classical to supremely athletic."

VII. Season finale: *Momentum: Go West!*

- What:** Ballet Nebraska's annual mixed-repertory program of short ballets in a wide range of styles, featuring the premiere of Erika Overturff's new ballet *Go West!*
- When/Where:** Friday, April 1, 7:30 pm at Joslyn Art Museum; Sunday, April 3, 2 pm, at the Iowa Western Arts Center, Council Bluffs
- Details:** *Momentum*, Ballet Nebraska's award-winning "mixed-repertory" program, showcases the artistic range and choreographic variety of ballet as a captivating art form. Heading this season's program will be the premiere of Erika Overturff's high-spirited new ballet *Go West!* Presented in partnership with Joslyn Art Museum, the ballet celebrates Joslyn's featured exhibition *Go West! Art of the American Frontier from the Buffalo Bill Center of the West*.
- Erika's take:** "Legends and folk tales have always been a rich source of ballet ideas. I'll be taking my inspiration from the spirit and stories of the American West, with high energy and plenty of action!"

VIII. Symphony collaboration: *Peter and the Wolf*

- What:** Ballet Nebraska's first performance with the Omaha Symphony, featuring Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*.
- When/Where:** Sunday, April 24, at the Holland Center
- Details:** Ballet Nebraska dancers will participate in this Omaha Symphony concert.
- Erika's take:** "We can't wait to work with the talented artists of the Omaha Symphony in this brand new production of *Peter and the Wolf*."

BALLET NEBRASKA'S SEASON SIX COMPANY ARTISTS

Erika Overturff

Founder and Artistic Director

Artist Sponsor: Holland Foundation



Erika Overturff is the founder and artistic director of Ballet Nebraska, the region's professional ballet company. Under her leadership, Ballet Nebraska enriches the area 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, studying 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. Area audiences have enjoyed Erika's performances in roles such as Eileen in *Swing, Swing, Swing!*, Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Lucy in *Dracula*, Snow Queen and Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*, Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*, and Myrtha in *Giselle*. 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*. Other featured works include *Tropico*, *Party Animals*, and *The Diner*. Erika also created Ballet Nebraska's lively and entertaining version of the holiday favorite *The Nutcracker*, which has premiered to enthusiastic audiences both at home and on tour.

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Matthew Carter

Ballet Master

Artist Sponsor: Nebraska Orthopaedic Hospital and OrthoWest



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 Albrecht in *Giselle*, Cavalier in *The Nutcracker*, White Rabbit in Kennet Oberly's *Alice In Wonderland*, the Asp in Erika Overturff's *Cleopatra*, 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*, *Sadako* and *Poseidon* 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 sixth season as ballet master.

Erin Alarcón

Company Dancer

Artist Sponsors: Clyde and Deborah Overturff



Erin Alarcón received her dance training under Christine Taylor and Luba Gulyaeva at North Jersey School of Dance Arts in Hackettstown, NJ where she was also a member of New Jersey Civic Youth Ballet. Erin went on graduate *magna cum laude* with a B.A. in dance performance at Mercyhurst University under the direction of Tauna Hunter. During her time at Mercyhurst she performed both leading and soloist roles. During the 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 performing the title role of *Cinderella*. With Ballet Nebraska, she has performed the principal roles in *Giselle*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and Sugar Plum Fairy in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker*. She has been featured in Mikhail Fokine's *The Dying Swan* and as Fee in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Erin also serves as Ballet Nebraska's operations manager and teaches classes and workshops throughout the state. This is Erin's sixth season with the company.

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Ryan Christopher

Company Dancer

Artist Sponsors: Victor and Linda Mattes



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. With Ballet Nebraska, Ryan has performed featured roles in *Giselle*, *Paquita*, *Snow White*, *The Nutcracker*, and several works in *Momentum* including Charles Weidman's *On My Mother's Side*. He has appeared as a guest artist throughout Colorado and around the United States. This is Ryan's third season with the company.

Vivi DiMarco

Company Dancer



Hailing from Chicago, 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, Vivi 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 The Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, 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 as the Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*, the lead in *Paquita*, and featured roles in *Alice in Wonderland*, *Les Odalisques*, and George Balanchine's *Valse Fantaisie*. She also serves as Ballet Nebraska's marketing coordinator. Vivi returns for her fourth season at Ballet Nebraska.

Claire Goodwillie

Company Dancer

Artist Sponsor: Midlands Choice



Claire Goodwillie began her ballet training at Omaha Theater Ballet School of Dance. She spent summers training with Pacific Northwest Ballet and Ballet Austin, as well as in Banff, Canada. She appeared in numerous Omaha Theater Ballet productions as both a student and apprentice. With Ballet Nebraska, Claire has danced as Rat Queen and Chinese soloist in *The Nutcracker*, Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Vampire Bride in *Dracula*, Geisha in *Sadako*, Red Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, Ostrich in *Party Animals*, Zulme in *Giselle*, and featured roles in *Paquita*, *The Diner*, and George Balanchine's *Valse Fantaisie*. She has also performed several times with Opera Omaha and Omaha Symphony. Claire returns for her sixth season with the company.

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Bret Samson

Company Dancer



Originally from Wisconsin, Bret Samson began her dance training at Lake Shore Dance with Amy Aichele and Gwen Agee in Saukville, 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 performed as Arabian Princess in *The Nutcracker*, soloist in Mikhail Fokine's *The Dying Swan*, Moyna in *Giselle*, and featured roles in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and many works in *Momentum*. She has also danced in Opera Omaha productions. This is Bret's sixth season with the company.

Kelsey Schwenker

Company Dancer

Artist Sponsor: Omaha Marketing Solutions



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, Brooklyn 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 lead roles in *Alice in Wonderland* and *Poseidon*, as well as featured roles in *The Nutcracker*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Dracula*, *Les Odalisques*, *Bacchanale Variations*, *Sadako*, *Party Animals*, *Giselle*, *Paquita*, *The Diner*, and George Balanchine's *Valse Fantaisie*. She is rehearsal director for Repertory Ensemble, the company's youth performance group. Kelsey returns for her sixth season with the company.

Katie van der Mars

Company Dancer

Artist Sponsor: metroMAGAZINE/mQUARTERLY



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 the lead in George Balanchine's *Valse Fantaisie*, French soloist in *The Nutcracker*, and featured roles in *Alice in Wonderland*, *Party Animals*, *Giselle*, *The Diner*, and many works in Ballet Nebraska's mixed-repertory production *Momentum*. Katie returns for her fourth season at Ballet Nebraska.

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Sasha York

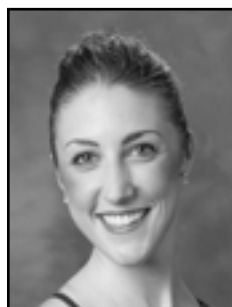
Company Dancer



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 Viktor Plotnikov, Septime Webre, and Harrison McEldowney. With Ballet Nebraska, Sasha has performed as Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Marc Antony in *Cleopatra*, Hilarion in *Giselle*, Prince Charming in *Snow White*, Cavalier and Snow King in *The Nutcracker*, White Knight in *Alice in Wonderland*, and lead roles in *Dracula*, *Swing Swing Swing!*, and Charles Weidman's *On My Mother's Side*. He previously danced for two seasons at Omaha Theater Ballet and is a featured guest artist in professional ballet productions throughout the United States. Sasha returns for his sixth season with the company.

Apprentices

Katherine Boatright



Katherine Boatright is a native of Bartlesville, Oklahoma. She began her classical ballet training at Inspirations Dance Studio and The Dance and Performing Arts Academy with Matthew Bridwell. Katherine earned her B.A. in dance performance with a minor in arts administration at Mercyhurst University under the direction of Tauna Hunter. During her summers, she has studied at Joffrey, American Ballet Theatre, Quartz Mountain and Summer Wind intensives. Katherine has previously danced with the Osage Ballet and Ballet Concerto. Katherine's repertoire includes *Firebird*, *Gaîté Parisienne*, *Giselle*, *La Bayadère*, *La Fille Mal Gardée*, *Le Corsaire*, *Les Patineurs*, *The Nutcracker*, *Tarentella*, *On My Mother's Side*, and numerous contemporary works by recognized as well as emerging choreographers. Katherine returns for her second season at Ballet Nebraska.

Rebecca Brenner



Ohio native and former member of Rochester City Ballet, Rebecca received her ballet training from Columbus City Ballet School and University of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. She attended summer intensives with American Ballet Theatre in New York City, trained on merit scholarship at Orlando Ballet School in Florida, and participated in Youth American Grand Prix, competing twice in its New York City finals. She has performed Balanchine works including *Walpurgisnacht Ballet*, *Valse-Fantaisie*, *Stars and Stripes*, *Raymonda Variations*, and *Serenade*. At Rochester City Ballet, she appeared in *The Nutcracker*, *Cinderella*, *Serenade* and the premiere of Jamey Leverett's *New York Cityscapes*. At Ballet Nebraska, Rebecca has performed in *Giselle*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Paquita*. This is Rebecca's second season with Ballet Nebraska.

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Katherine Eppink



Katherine is a graduate of the University of Utah, where she earned a BFA from the department of ballet. Katherine began her classical ballet training in Des Moines at Iowa Dance Theatre. She also danced on scholarship as a member of Utah Ballet, the resident performing company of University of Utah, where she performed lead roles in *Serenade*, *Coppélia*, *Swan Lake*, *Ruslan and Ludmila*, and *The Nutcracker*. Katherine spent summers training with Pacific Northwest Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Joffrey Ballet, Ballet West, Nashville Ballet, Ballet Met, and Korean Ballet Theatre. At Ballet Nebraska, Katherine has danced in *Giselle*, *The Nutcracker*, *Paquita*, and *On My Mother's Side*. Katherine returns to Ballet Nebraska for her second season.

Jake Godek [new for Season Six]



Originally from Keller, Texas, Jake Godek studied dance at West Texas A&M University under Edward Truitt, Leslie Williams, and Crystal Bertrand. He danced for two seasons with Lone Star Ballet of Amarillo, performing the lead role of Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*, Nutcracker Prince in *The Nutcracker*, and Caesar in *Cleopatra*, among others. Jake also performed three summers in the outdoor musical drama *Texas* as a dancer and as understudy to theatrical roles, eventually performing the lead role of Calvin. This is Jake's first season with Ballet Nebraska.

Alyssa Grimsley



Alyssa began her dance training at Western Arkansas Ballet in Fort Smith, Arkansas. She trained during summers at Joffrey Midwest, Ballet Austin, Tulsa Ballet, and Cincinnati Ballet. Alyssa graduated *summa cum laude* with a BFA in ballet performance from the University of Oklahoma, where she trained with Mary Margaret Holt, Clara Cravey, Steve Brule, Ilya Kozadayev, and Jeremy Lindberg. Alyssa toured with Oklahoma Festival Ballet at the Haydn's Classical Music Festival in Eisenstadt, Austria and with Burklyn Ballet Theatre to perform at Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland. She has performed in Ballet Nebraska productions of *Giselle*, *The Nutcracker*, *Paquita*, and *On My Mother's Side*. Alyssa returns for her second season with Ballet Nebraska.

Alexandra Hoffman [new for Season Six]

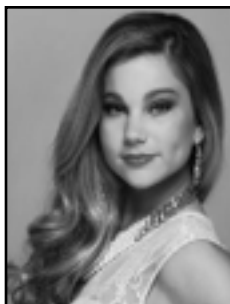


Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, Alexandra Hoffman received her classical ballet training under the direction of Ana Lobe of Cleveland San Jose Ballet. As a dancer at Louisville Ballet, Alexandra performed a variety of roles including the principal girl in *La Vivandiere*, and a soloist in *Paquita*. She has danced in numerous classical productions including Bruce Simpson's *Swan Lake*, *Suite en Blanc*, *Giselle*, *La Sylphide*, Alun Jones' *Cinderella*, and Val Caniparoli's *The Nutcracker* and *A Cinderella Story*. Alexandra joins Ballet Nebraska for her first season with the company.

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Kogan Murphy [new for Season Six]



A native of Chicago, Kogan Murphy trained with the Judith Svalander School Of Ballet before becoming a trainee with The Joffrey Ballet of Chicago for two seasons. She was also a member of Ballet Theatre of Indiana in its inaugural season. Kogan has performed lead roles including Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker* and Odette in *Swan Lake*, and appeared in Gerald Arpino's *Birthday Variations*. In addition to classical ballet, Kogan works with the Miss America Organization, where she competed for and won several talent awards and scholarships. This is Kogan's first season with Ballet Nebraska.

Laura Skold [new for Season Six]



Laura Skold was born and raised in West Des Moines, Iowa. She trained at School of Classical Ballet and Dance and performed with Ballet Des Moines before spending her final year of high school at the prestigious Walnut Hill School for the Arts. Laura earned her B.F.A. in Ballet at the University of Utah. During summers, she trained at the School of American Ballet, Walnut Hill School for the Arts, Colorado Ballet, and Ballet Austin. Laura has danced lead and soloist roles including both Swanhilda and Dawn variation in *Coppélia*, a lead in Ma Cong's *Passion There*, Summer Fairy in *Cinderella*, and featured roles in *La Bayadere* and *Swan Lake*. She has performed abroad in Seoul, South Korea and Zaragoza, Spain. This is Laura's first season with Ballet Nebraska.

Amaris Sharratt



Amaris began her training at Ballet Arts in Tucson, Arizona under the direction of Mary-Beth Cabana. She spent several summers training on full scholarship at Pacific Northwest Ballet, Houston Ballet, and Ballet Tucson. As a Marshall Thurber Scholarship recipient at Burklyn Ballet Theater, Amaris performed in Edinburgh, Scotland, at Fringe Festival, where she performed a featured role in Robert Royce's *Beauty and the Beast*. She also performed with Milwaukee Ballet II, Houston Ballet, Nevada Ballet Theater, Ballet Tucson, Earthen Vessels, and Hopestone Dance Company. Amaris danced featured roles in *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, *Paquita*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Amahl And The Night Visitors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the title role in *Cinderella*, among many other classical and contemporary works. At Ballet Nebraska, Amaris has performed in *Giselle*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Paquita*. Amaris returns for her second season with Ballet Nebraska.

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. 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*. With Ballet Nebraska, Anna has performed in *Giselle*, *Paquita*, *Snow White*, *The Nutcracker*, *On My Mother's Side*, and many roles in *Momentum*. Anna returns for her third season with Ballet Nebraska.

Ballet

N E B R A S K A

Whitney Walsh



Originally from Westlake Village, California, Whitney Walsh trained at the California Dance Theatre and performed leading roles with Pacific Festival Ballet. As a trainee with The Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, she danced in Alexei Kremnev's *The Nutcracker Suite*, *Coppélia*, and *The Bluebird of Happiness*, Gerald Arpino's *Viva Vivaldi*, and in original pieces by William B. McClellan Jr., Alexei Kremnev and Stefanie Batten Bland. Whitney spent summers training with The Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, American Ballet Theatre (New York), Houston Ballet, and Kirov Academy of Ballet. With Ballet Nebraska, Whitney has performed in *Giselle*, *The Nutcracker*, and *The Diner*. This is Whitney's second season with Ballet Nebraska.

Chloé Watson

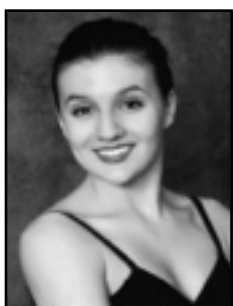
Artist Sponsors: Herbert & Carole Dewey



Chloé graduated *cum laude* from Purchase College Conservatory of Dance at State University of New York (SUNY) with a BFA in dance performance. She began her classical ballet training at Dallas Ballet Center and graduated with distinguished high honors from Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas, Texas. She studied on scholarship at Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance and performed in George Balanchine's *Serenade* at Jacob's Pillow. While at university, Chloé studied at Paris Opéra Ballet at the invitation of Kazuko Hirabayashi, and traveled to Madrid with members of Compañía Nacional de Danza, where she performed in Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments*. As a Ballet Nebraska trainee, Chloé performed in *Snow White*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Momentum*. She presented her original work *Temporary Dwelling* as part of Ballet Nebraska's *New Works* program. Chloé returns for her third season with Ballet Nebraska.

Trainee

Hannah Birdwell [New for Season Six]



Ballet Nebraska II Student Company

Motion41 Dance, Omaha, NE

Summer intensives at Joffrey Workshop (TX), Kansas City Ballet, Motion41 Dance, Omaha Theater Ballet