

AMERICAN  
MIDWEST  
**BALLET**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**October 29, 2019**

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[Full-resolution photos available here.](#)  
[Download](#) this media kit, plus company bios, in printable PDF format.



*The Snow King and Queen, the Sugar Plum Fairy, and other favorite Nutcracker characters will be joined this year by dancers performing a variation in Indian classical dance style bharatanatyam. [More full-resolution photos...](#)*

### **THE NUTCRACKER ENCHANTS WITH A NEW VARIATION**

OMAHA — Classical dance of India will make its debut in this season’s production of American Midwest Ballet’s beloved family classic *The Nutcracker*, artistic director Erika Overturff said.

“For the first time, Midwest audiences – along with Clara and her Nutcracker Prince – will be entertained by an India-themed variation,” Overturff said. “I am delighted that India will be celebrated in dance alongside the Spanish, Arabian, Chinese, Russian, French, and other traditional variations.”

Dancers from Viswanatya Niketan, an Omaha-based school of classical Indian dance directed by Usha Devaraju, will perform the variation in India’s *bharatanatyam* style of dance, Overturff said.

*Bharatanatyam* is the oldest style of Indian classical dance, with documented roots as early as the 6th century CE, Overturff said, and today is India’s most popular classical dance form. It is noted for its brilliant, intricate footwork, and like classical ballet it uses a stylized vocabulary of gestures to convey specific meanings, she said.

American Midwest Ballet’s Indian *Nutcracker* variation will feature brilliantly adorned new costumes made with silks and jewelry crafted in India, she said.

For music, the new Indian variation uses “an unearthed gem from Tchaikovsky’s original *Nutcracker* score that finally gets its turn in the spotlight,” Overturff said.

The new variation, Overturff said, will blend with the other elements that make American Midwest Ballet’s *The Nutcracker* a perennial family favorite: E.T.A. Hoffman’s engaging story, Pytor Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s magnificent score, and a visually stunning production that features AMB’s 29-member professional company and more than 100 dancers from throughout the community.

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"Audiences are drawn to *The Nutcracker's* memorable scenes and colorful characters," Overturff said. "There's young Clara, whose dreams take her on a fantastic journey; her magical Uncle Drosselmeyer; the menacing Rat Queen; the delicate Sugar Plum Fairy; and more. This combination of a charming story, lively action, and brilliant music and dancing makes *The Nutcracker* a ballet with something for everyone."

*The Nutcracker* will usher in the holiday season with a special pre-Thanksgiving performance at Iowa Western Arts Center on Sunday, November 24 at 2 pm, followed by a three-show run December 7 and 8 at the Orpheum Theater in Omaha, and a tour to San Antonio, Texas.

Tickets for Iowa Western Arts Center are available at [artscenter.iwcc.edu](https://artscenter.iwcc.edu) or by calling (712) 388-7140. Tickets for the Orpheum Theater are available at [ticketomaha.com](https://ticketomaha.com) or by calling (402) 345-0606.

For ticket links and more information, visit [amballet.org](https://amballet.org).

*American Midwest Ballet brings the beauty, athleticism, and energy of professional ballet to audiences in the Midwest and beyond. Performing at home and on tour, its mission is to provide enrichment through programs of the highest quality: professional dance performances, educational programs, and community outreach. American Midwest Ballet's talented professional dancers hail from around the nation and abroad. The company inspires people through its expressive performing artists, acclaimed choreographers, skilled teachers, and stunning productions.*

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**QUICK GUIDE TO AMERICAN MIDWEST BALLET'S *THE NUTCRACKER***

**What:**

Always fresh, lively, and thoroughly entertaining, American Midwest Ballet's *The Nutcracker* returns with the visual splendor and charming story that make it a family favorite. Set to one of composer Pytor Tchaikovsky's most famous works, it transports audiences to the enchanting Land of Snow and the opulent Kingdom of Sweets.

New in this year's production is an Indian classical dance variation, set to a lively section of Tchaikovsky's original *Nutcracker* score. Dancers from Viswanatya Niketan, an Omaha-based school of classical Indian dance directed by Usha Devaraju, will perform the Indian variation.

**When:**

Sunday, November 24, 2:00 pm - Iowa Western Arts Center, Council Bluffs

Saturday, December 7, 2:00 pm & 7:30 pm; and Sunday, December 8, 2:00 pm - Orpheum Theater, Omaha

American Midwest Ballet also will stage the production on tour in San Antonio, Texas.

**Tickets:**

Iowa Western Arts Center performance: Arts Center box office, [artscenter.iwcc.edu](http://artscenter.iwcc.edu) or [712-388-7140](tel:712-388-7140).

Orpheum performance: Ticket Omaha: [www.ticketomaha.com](http://www.ticketomaha.com); [402-345-0606](tel:402-345-0606); box office, 13th & Douglas.

**Sponsors:**

Premier Benefactors - Iowa West Foundation, Fred and Eve Simon Charitable Foundation, Holland Foundation, Douglas County

Season Sponsors - Omaha Steaks, Peter Kiewit Foundation

Major Support - Heider Family Foundation, Nebraska Arts Council, Nebraska Cultural Endowment, Sherwood Foundation

**Highlight:**

The new Indian variation will give *Nutcracker* audiences a chance to experience *bharatanatyam*, a style that is both the oldest and the most popular of India's classical dance traditions. Its dazzling footwork and intricately stylized gestures make it instantly recognizable.

**Erika's take:**

"Adding our new Indian variation to the well-known Spanish, Arabian, Chinese, Russian, and French variations in the ballet's second act makes our *Nutcracker* even more colorful, entertaining, and international in flavor."

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**THE NUTCRACKER BY THE NUMBERS**

- 1892:** Year that the original version of *The Nutcracker* premiered at the Maryinsky Theater of St. Petersburg, Russia. The first American full-length production was by the San Francisco Ballet in 1944.
- 130:** Approximate total number of performers – professional, student and community – who participate in the production.
- 260:** Approximate number of specially-constructed costumes used in the production.
- 243:** Number of steps in the Sugar Plum Fairy’s famous variation, danced to the music of the chime-like keyboard instrument known as the celesta. How do we know? We had her count them for us from memory! Bonus historical fact: Tchaikovsky discovered the celesta on a visit to Paris in 1891, the same year he began writing the music for *The Nutcracker*. Invented by Charles Mustel, the celesta had been unveiled to the public just two years before, and Tchaikovsky was the first major composer to use it.
- 13:** Total number of public and school performances at home and on tour.
- 4:** Average number of roles performed by a professional company member in a single performance.
- 8:** Number of legs on the Chinese dragon seen in Act II.
- 3:** Number of artistic elements incorporated in the ***bharatanatyam*** dance style: *bhava* (emotion), *raga* (melody) and *tala* (rhythm.) *Natyam* is the Sanskrit word for dance; so, *bharatanatyam* is a compound word meaning a dance form where emotion, melody and rhythm are expressed.

[Source: <https://www.culturalindia.net/indian-dance/classical/bharatnatyam.html>]