AMERICAN MIDWEST BALLET

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NEW ENHANCEMENTS TO *THE NUTCRACKER* COULDN'T BE SWEETER

The Sugar Plum Fairy – one of the most iconic characters in the holiday ballet *The Nutcracker* – is getting a "home makeover" in this season's American Midwest Ballet production, artistic director Erika Overturff said.

"The moment she appears on the stage, in her glittering tiara and opulent tutu, is the moment that has inspired countless little girls to dream of being ballerinas," said Overturff. "This season we've decided to make that moment even more magical with some new enhancements to her surroundings."

The first new feature will be unveiled right after intermission, she said, at the audience's first glimpse of the Sugar Plum Fairy and her attendants, the elegant Sugar Plum Court and a darling group of Candies. This ensemble of 26 young dancers, chosen by audition from across the community, is outfitted this season with new costumes designed by Deborah Overturff and constructed over a period of eight months.

"Our goal was for the Sugar Plum Court to look regal, yet whimsical," she said. "The dancers are dressed in soft shades of lavender, pink and blue, and utilize iridescent and transparent fabrics, trimmed with pearls, beads and sequins, that give them a beautiful, shimmery quality. The effect when the scene is revealed is stunning."

"Something that makes *The Nutcracker* so charming is the inclusion of children in the cast. Some of our youngest dancers are featured as Candies, and our young performers are absolutely thrilled to show off their brand new costumes this season, featuring three-dimensional decor in a variety of pastel hues," she said. "We were so excited about their new look, that it inspired me to create new choreography for them as well."

Another highlight will come, she said, with a newly designed set piece framing the performers. "Inspiration was drawn from the art nouveau style, and it was created to tie in perfectly with our custom sweets backdrop. When coming up with new ideas for "Clara's throne", we discovered a Victorian conversation settee that looked like it jumped right out of the background! It was a totally unique piece and the jumping off point for the rest of the design."

"And there's more," she said "but we are saving some surprises for the audience!"

Nutcracker season also welcomes a number of related events, including *Nutcracker* workshops in schools, a sensory-friendly Nutcracker performance in collaboration with Autism Action Partnership, the Nutcracker Gala at the Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center,, student matinees in partnership with Omaha Performing Arts at the Orpheum, and an upcoming tour to Spirit Lake, Iowa – a tradition that began 17 years ago with the company's first season!

Performances of American Midwest Ballet's *The Nutcracker* will be November 21 and 22 at the Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center, and December 4-6 at Omaha's Orpheum Theater. Ticket information is available at **amballet.org**.

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