

# Ballet

N E B R A S K A

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 29, 2011

Contact: Erika Overturff, (402) 541-6946

### IT'S A WRAP! DIRECTOR'S FAVORITE CONCLUDES BALLET'S SUCCESSFUL DEBUT SEASON

OMAHA -- Ballet Nebraska will wind up its debut season May 21 and 22 at the Rose Theater just the way its artistic director had hoped: performing one of her favorites, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

"When we started Ballet Nebraska, selecting works for our first season was an exciting prospect," Erika Overturff said. "We had the opportunity to present works that I felt were really special.

"And I've loved this ballet from the first moment I saw it. It's so beautiful... it's such a great story... and it's so much fun to dance!"

Sharing that fun, Overturff said, will be Ballet Nebraska's largest cast to date. Ballet Nebraska's company of 11 professional dancers will take the leading roles, backed by its eight-member student ensemble, Ballet Nebraska II. Joining them will be more than 80 guest and community performers, ranging from six-year-old stage newcomers to experienced adult actors and dancers, she said.

Created by internationally regarded choreographer Oskar Antunez, the ballet closely follows William Shakespeare's intricate storyline, Overturff said. One of Shakespeare's most popular and widely-staged plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is an imaginative comedy involving a contest of wills between Oberon and Titania, the King and Queen of the Fairies, complicated by two mismatched pairs of human lovers and a band of bumbling amateur actors, all of whom have strayed into the fairies' realm on a midsummer night.

"It's a great story to tell through dance, because ballet is really good at communicating characters and relationships through action," Overturff said. "Oskar's choreography tells you exactly who everyone is, what they're doing, and how they feel about it. It conveys the story in a way that's perfectly clear, fast-paced, and very funny."

Ballet Nebraska's performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be at 7:30 pm on Saturday, May 21, and 2 pm Sunday, May 22, at the Rose Theater. Ticket information is available from Ticket Omaha, 402-345-0606; online at [www.ticketomaha.com](http://www.ticketomaha.com); or in person at the Ticket Omaha box office in the Holland Center, 13th and Douglas Streets.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is presented with the support of the Mutual of Omaha Foundation, the Lincoln Financial Foundation, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. More information is available from Ballet Nebraska's website, [balletnebraska.org](http://balletnebraska.org)

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### FACT SHEET: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

#### Oskar Antunez, Guest Choreographer

Oskar Antunez toured extensively throughout the United States and Europe while performing with Les Grands Ballet Canadiens, the Harkness Ballet of New York, and the Royal Danish Ballet. He made his choreographic debut with the Royal Danish Ballet, gaining nationwide acclaim for his original works.

Equally accomplished in ballet, classic jazz, and musical comedy, he staged time-honored classics and choreographed numerous and varied contemporary works for the Montgomery Ballet, where he was Associate Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer from 1996 to 2007. His choreographic works include Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, Stravinsky's *Tango*, *Huapango* (with music by Pablo Moncayo), *The Planets* (with orchestral suite by Gustav Holst), *Gatsby* (set to music from the Roaring '20's), *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Joey's Jest*, *Carmen*, *Peter & the Wolf*, *Carnival of the Animals*, and *Red, White & Blue*. In 2006, he presented his newest full-length ballet, *Alice in Wonderland*, based on the classic children's novel by Lewis Carroll.

A native of El Paso, Oskar received his early training from Ingeborg Heuser, was Assistant Director and Ballet Master of Ballet El Paso for ten years, received a degree in Ballet Performance from the University of Texas - El Paso (UTEP) in 1993, was on the dance faculty at UTEP and the El Paso Community College, and served on the Dance Advisory Panel on the Arts of Texas.

#### Felix Mendelssohn, Composer

Felix Mendelssohn [1809 – 1847] was born in Hamburg, Germany, into a prosperous banking family, and was recognized early as a musical prodigy. He began taking piano lessons from his mother at age 6 and made his first public concert appearance at age 9. He was 17 when he wrote the overture for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in 1826. He then moved on to composing symphonies, concerti, oratorios, piano music and chamber music, while also enjoying a distinguished career as a conductor. Sixteen years after composing the overture, he returned to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when he was commissioned to write a suite of incidental music for the entire play. It remains one of his best-loved and most-widely-performed works. [Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix\\_Mendelssohn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_Mendelssohn)]

#### William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

As with all of Shakespeare's plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was never published officially during the playwright's lifetime, to prevent piracy by rival theater companies. Experts believe it was written around 1596, possibly in honor of an aristocratic wedding. While Shakespeare often based his plays on older works, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is one of only three (the others being *The Tempest* and *Love's Labour Lost*) in which the main plot appears to be completely original. Still one of Shakespeare's most widely performed works, it also has inspired adaptations including musicals, ballets, and films – including a 1935 production with a cast that included James Cagney, Mickey Rooney and Olivia de Havilland, which earned an Oscar nomination for Best Picture. [Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Midsummer\\_Night's\\_Dream](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Midsummer_Night's_Dream)]

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### PHOTO DOWNLOADS: *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

Press-quality files of the following photos are available for download (6.6mb zip archive) from:

<http://www.balletnebraska.org/media/msnd-201105-photos.zip>



Natasha Grimm, a member of the Ballet Nebraska professional company, will dance the role of Titania in its upcoming production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



Audition candidates show off their numbers during Ballet Nebraska's March 6 audition for community performers for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The ballet features Ballet Nebraska's 11-member professional company, as well as more than 80 guest and community performers.



Ballet Nebraska artistic director Erika Overturff leads a group of student dancers in a rehearsal for the company's upcoming production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



Ballet Nebraska ballet master Matthew Carter and artistic director Erika Overturff lead members of the professional company in a rehearsal for its upcoming production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Dancers visible in the mirror are, from left: Claire Goodwillie, Bret Samson, Sasha York, Angela Zolczynski, and Alberto Liberatoscioli.



Artistic director Erika Overturff watches as Ballet Nebraska professional dancer Sasha York rehearses his role as Oberon in the company's upcoming performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, May 21 and 22 at the Rose Theater.