



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 13, 2017

Contact: Erika Overturff (Artistic Director & CEO), 402-541-6946

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NEW RUSSIAN DANCE ADDS FLAIR TO *THE NUTCRACKER*

OMAHA — A lively new Russian dance will premiere next week in Ballet Nebraska's upcoming production of *The Nutcracker*.

The Russian dance is typically an audience favorite, said Erika Overturff, Ballet Nebraska's founder and artistic director. "The music is some of the most well-known and memorable in the entire ballet," she said. "The new Russian dance is a high-energy piece featuring two men and three women. Tchaikovsky's spirited music for this variation provided inspiration for the new choreography, which combines Russian folk steps, fast turns, and big jumps and tricks."

"Our new costume designs complete the effect," she said, "showcasing colorful fabrics in blue and teal, black fur trim, grand swirling skirts for the women, and of course boots and fur hats!"

Beyond the new Russian dance, Overturff said, *The Nutcracker* will continue the traditional scenes and colorful characters that audiences appreciate: young Clara, whose dreams take her on a fantastic journey; her mysterious 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, she said.

"In any *Nutcracker* audience you're likely to find children enjoying their first ballet experience... families sharing a beloved tradition... and experienced ballet fans savoring the brilliant classical style and the artists' interpretations," she said. "People keep coming back because *The Nutcracker* is a jewel with so many facets."

Ballet Nebraska will present a special pre-Thanksgiving showing of *The Nutcracker* on Sunday, November 19, at 2 pm at the Iowa Western Arts Center. Performances at Omaha's Orpheum Theater will be Saturday, December 2, at 2 and 7:30 pm, and Sunday, December 3, at 2 pm. Ticket information is available at balletnebraska.org/performances.

Ballet Nebraska will also debut its first Nutcracker Gala at the Orpheum Theater on Friday, December 1. The event, planned to occur every other year, will invite guests onto the stage for a special Nutcracker experience, Overturff said. "We are so grateful to our Honorary Chairs, Amy Haddad and Steve Martin, for helping us establish this wonderful event to benefit the company," she said.

Ballet Nebraska is the region's professional dance company. The season is presented with support from premiere benefactors the Iowa West Foundation, Douglas County, the Fred and Eve Simon Charitable Foundation, the Richard Brooke Foundation, and the Holland Foundation; season sponsor Omaha Steaks; and major support from the Peter Kiewit Foundation, Cindy and Scott Heider, the Sherwood Foundation, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

##

Ballet

NEBRASKA

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

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Contact: Erika Overturff (Artistic Director & CEO), 402-541-6946

QUICK GUIDE TO BALLET NEBRASKA'S *THE NUTCRACKER*

- What:** Always fresh, lively, and thoroughly entertaining, Ballet Nebraska's *The Nutcracker* returns with the visual splendor and charming story that make it a family favorite. Set to one of composer Peter Tchaikovsky's most famous works, it transports audiences to the enchanting Land of Snow and the opulent Kingdom of Sweets, this year introducing a spirited new Russian dance.
- When:** Sunday, November 19, at 2 pm at the Iowa Western Arts Center, Iowa Western Community College, Council Bluffs;
Saturday, December 2, at 2 and 7:30 pm, and Sunday, December 3, at 2 pm, at Omaha's Orpheum Theater
- Tickets:** Iowa Western performance: Arts Center box office, artscenter.iwcc.edu or 712-388-7140
Orpheum performances: Ticket Omaha: www.ticketomaha.com; 402-345-0606; box office, 13th & Douglas
- Sponsors:** Premier Benefactors - Iowa West Foundation, Douglas County, Fred and Eve Simon Charitable Foundation, Richard Brooke Foundation, Holland Foundation

Season Sponsor - Omaha Steaks

Major Support - Peter Kiewit Foundation, Cindy and Scott Heider, Sherwood Foundation, Nebraska Arts Council, Nebraska Cultural Endowment
- Details:** A newly-choreographed Russian dance highlights the holiday ballet that has become a beloved tradition for many families.
- Erika's take:** "Audiences will enjoy the high-energy athleticism showcased in our new Russian dance."

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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, with choreography by Lev Ivanov and music by Peter Tchaikovsky. The first American full-length production was by the San Francisco Ballet in 1944.
- 138:** Total number of performers – professional, student, and community – in this year’s Ballet Nebraska production. Plus two dogs!
 - 4:** Total number of public performances: 2 pm Sunday, November 19, at the Iowa Western Arts Center in Council Bluffs; 2 and 7:30 pm Saturday, December 2, and 2 pm Sunday, December 3, at Omaha’s Orpheum Theater.
 - 3:** Total number of special daytime performances for students from area schools.
- 6,000:** Estimated number of students who will attend the school performances.
 - 4:** Average number of roles performed by a professional company member in a single performance.
- 254:** Number of specially-constructed costumes used in the production.
- 8:** Number of legs on the Chinese dragon seen in Act II.

BALLET NEBRASKA'S SEASON EIGHT ARTISTS

Erika Overturff

Artistic Director & CEO

Artist Sponsor: Anne Thorne Weaver



Erika Overturff is the founder of Ballet Nebraska, the region's professional ballet company. Under her leadership as artistic director and CEO, 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. Following early high school graduation as valedictorian, 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. 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 around 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, created an all-new production of *Peter and the Wolf* with the Omaha Symphony, 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*, *Cleopatra*, and *Go West!* Other featured works include *Tropico*, *Party Animals*, *The Diner*, and *Ella*. 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. For her vision and achievements, Erika was named a recipient of Midlands Business Journal's 40 Under 40 Awards, honoring area entrepreneurs, executives, and professionals.

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Matthew Carter

Ballet Master

Artist Sponsor: Union Pacific Foundation



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.

Area audiences have enjoyed Matthew in roles such as Prince Siegfried in *Swan Lake*, 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 original works with numerous schools and professional companies, including *Bacchanale Variations*, *Signs of Life*, *Sadako*, *Poseidon*, *Transcription* and *Swan Lake* 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 is a founding member of Ballet Nebraska and returns for his eighth season as ballet master.

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Artists

Erin Alarcón

Artist Sponsor: Deborah & Clyde Overturff



Hometown: Hackettstown, New Jersey

Training & Experience: B.A. in dance from Mercyhurst University, magna cum laude; New Jersey School of Dance Arts; summer programs at Eglevsky Ballet and Joffrey Ballet; professional performances with SoMar Dance Works and Ballet Concert; guest artist with Iowa Dance Theater

Featured Repertory: Sugar Plum Fairy in The Nutcracker; Odette in Swan Lake; title roles in Giselle and Alice in Wonderland; featured roles in Tropico, Party Animals, The Diner, DanceSport, and Ella.

Additional Highlights: choreographed One in Three, featured in Momentum to rave reviews; eighth season with Ballet Nebraska; founding company member.

Rebecca Brenner



Hometown: Columbus, Ohio

Training & Experience: B.F.A. in dance from University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music; Columbus City Ballet School, merit scholarship at Orlando Ballet School; summer program at American Ballet Theater; member of Rochester City Ballet

Featured Repertory: Little Swan and Neapolitan variation in Swan Lake; roles in Giselle, The Nutcracker, Paquita, Cleopatra, and Go West!

Additional Highlights: participated in Youth American Grand Prix New York City finals; fourth season with Ballet Nebraska.

Ryan Christopher



Hometown: Golden, Colorado

Training & Experience: International Youth Ballet School and Performing Arts Conservatory of Texas; professional dancer with Ballet Ariel and Boulder Ballet; guest artist throughout Colorado and around the United States

Featured Repertory: soloist in Paquita; pas de trois in Swan Lake; pas de six in Giselle; Snow King and Cavalier in The Nutcracker; featured roles in On My Mother's Side and Go West!

Additional Highlights: former baseball and football athlete; professional costume and prop designer; fifth season with Ballet Nebraska

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Katherine Eppink

Artist Sponsor: Herb & Carole Dewey



Hometown: Des Moines, Iowa

Training & Experience: B.F.A. in ballet from the University of Utah and scholarship member of Utah Ballet; Iowa Ballet Academy; guest artist at Iowa Dance Theatre; summer programs at Pacific Northwest Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Joffrey Ballet on full scholarship, Ballet West, Nashville Ballet and Ballet Met

*Featured Repertory: Spanish and Ballerina Doll in *The Nutcracker*; soloist in *Bournonville Divertissements*; featured roles in *Go West!* and *Ella**

Additional Highlights: performed two world premieres in Seoul, South Korea; fourth season with Ballet Nebraska

Claire Goodwillie



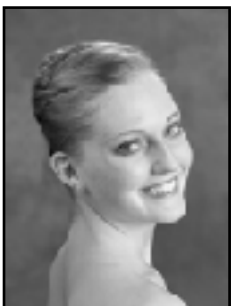
Hometown: Omaha, Nebraska

Training & Experience: Omaha Theater Ballet School of Dance; summer programs at Pacific Northwest Ballet and Ballet Austin; apprentice with Omaha Theater Ballet

*Featured Repertory: title role in *Cleopatra*; Rat Queen in *The Nutcracker*; Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; featured roles in *Sadako, Party Animals, Giselle, The Diner, and Go West!**

Additional Highlights: eighth season with Ballet Nebraska; founding company member.

Alyssa Grimsley



Hometown: Fort Smith, Arkansas

Training & Experience: B.F.A. in ballet performance from the University of Oklahoma, summa cum laude; Western Arkansas Ballet; summer programs at Joffrey Midwest, Ballet Austin, Tulsa Ballet, and Cincinnati Ballet

*Featured Repertory: Big Swan in *Swan Lake*, Spanish in *The Nutcracker*; roles in *Giselle, Paquita, Go West!*, and *Ella**

Additional Highlights: toured with Oklahoma Festival Ballet to Eisenstadt, Austria and with Burklyn Ballet Theatre to Edinburgh, Scotland; fourth season with Ballet Nebraska

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Alexandra Hoffman



Hometown: Cleveland, Ohio

Training & Experience: Ana Lobe of Cleveland San Jose Ballet; summer programs at Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, Nashville Ballet, and Louisville Ballet; trainee with Louisville Ballet

Featured Repertory: Ballerina Doll and Spanish in *The Nutcracker*; Little Swan in *Swan Lake*; roles in *Cleopatra*, *Go West!*, *Bournonville Divertissements*, and *Transcription*

Additional Highlight: third season with Ballet Nebraska

Wyatt Payne



Hometown: Wichita, Kansas

Training & Experience: B.F.A in ballet performance from Friends University; Rogers Ballet; summer programs at Next Generation Ballet and Oklahoma City Ballet

Featured Repertory: Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Snow King in *The Nutcracker*; pas de deux from *Don Quixote*, *Le Corsaire*, and *The Firebird*

Additional Highlight: first season with Ballet Nebraska

Bret Samson



Hometown: Saukville, Wisconsin

Training & Experience: Lake Shore Dance; Steps on Broadway; performed with Milwaukee Ballet II, Madison Ballet, and Omaha Theater Ballet

Featured Repertory: Arabian Princess and Chinese soloist in *The Nutcracker*; soloist in Mikhail Fokine's *The Dying Swan*; featured roles in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Sadako*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Giselle*, and *Ella*

Additional Highlights: eighth season with Ballet Nebraska; founding company member

Kelsey Schwenker



Hometown: Boulder, Colorado

Training & Experience: B.F.A. in ballet from the University of Oklahoma, summa cum laude; Ballet Nouveau Colorado; summer programs at Kansas City Ballet, Brooklyn Ballet Theatre, Boulder Jazz Dance Workshop, and Paul Taylor Dance Company

Featured Repertory: lead roles in *Alice in Wonderland*, *Poseidon*, and *Flower Festival Pas de Deux*; Dew Drop Fairy and Snow Queen in *The Nutcracker*; featured roles in *Giselle*, *The Diner*, *Go West!*, *Swan Lake*, and *DanceSport*

Additional Highlights: rehearsal director for Repertory Ensemble, the company's youth performance group; eighth season with Ballet Nebraska; founding company member

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Amaris Sharratt



Hometown: Tucson, Arizona

Training & Experience: Ballet Arts; summer programs at Pacific Northwest Ballet, Houston Ballet, and Ballet Tucson on full scholarship; performed with Milwaukee Ballet II, Houston Ballet, Nevada Ballet Theater, Ballet Tucson, Earthen Vessels, and Hopestone Dance Company

Featured Repertory: roles in *Giselle*, *The Nutcracker*, *Paquita*, *Cleopatra*, *Go West!*, *Swan Lake*, and *Ella*

Additional Highlights: performed in Edinburgh, Scotland as a scholarship recipient at Burklyn Ballet Theater; fourth season with Ballet Nebraska

Anders Southerland



Hometown: Seattle, Washington

Training & Experience: trained under teachers Peter Boal, Bruce Wells, and Le Yin of Pacific Northwest Ballet; member of Houston Ballet II and Milwaukee Ballet II

Featured Repertory: wide assortment of *corps de ballet* and character roles in main company productions and lead roles in second company repertoire

Additional Highlights: selected to train with Pacific Northwest Ballet at age eight through a public outreach program; first season with Ballet Nebraska

Anna Swenson



Hometown: Spokane, Washington

Training & Experience: Ballet Arts Academy; trainee program at school of Alberta Ballet; summer programs at Walnut Hill School for the Arts, Joffrey Ballet's Jazz and Contemporary program, and School of Alberta Ballet

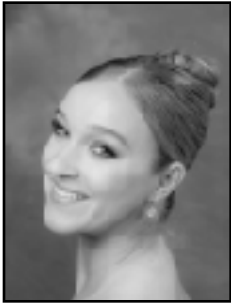
Featured Repertory: Arabian Princess in *The Nutcracker*; Big Swan in *Swan Lake*; soloist in *Blackbird*; roles in *Party Animals*, *Giselle*, *Cleopatra*, *Go West!*, and *Ella*

Additional Highlight: fifth season with Ballet Nebraska

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Katie van der Mars



Hometown: Corvallis, Oregon

Training & Experience: B.F.A. in ballet performance from the University of Utah and member of Utah Ballet; Corvallis Academy of Ballet; summer programs at Atlanta Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, and Ballet West

Featured Repertory: lead in George Balanchine's *Valse Fantaisie*; French soloist and Snow Queen in *The Nutcracker*; soloist in *Les Odalisque*, *Swan Lake*, and *Bournonville Divertissements*; featured roles in *Party Animals*, *Giselle*, *The Diner!*, *Go West!*, and *Ella*

Additional Highlight: sixth season with Ballet Nebraska

Chloé Watson

Artist Sponsor: Herb & Carole Dewey



Hometown: Dallas, Texas

Training & Experience: B.F.A. in dance performance from the Conservatory of Dance at Purchase College, State University of New York, *cum laude*; Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, high dance honors; Dallas Ballet Center; private study with Kim Abel; Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance on scholarship; studied under former Paris Opéra Ballet *étoiles* in Paris and under members of Compañía Nacional de Danza in Madrid

Featured Repertory: roles in *Snow White*, *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, *Paquita*, *Cleopatra*, *Go West!*, *Swan Lake*, and *Ella*

Additional Highlights: performed in George Balanchine's *Serenade* at Jacob's Pillow; presented her original works *Temporary Dwelling* in Ballet Nebraska's New Works program and *Ophelia* on tour with Ballet Vero Beach; fifth season with Ballet Nebraska

Sasha York

Artist Sponsor: Omaha World-Herald



Hometown: Chelyabinsk, Russia

Training & Experience: Paavola School of Dance; pre-professional program at Pittsburgh Ballet Theater; member of Omaha Theater Ballet

Featured Repertory: title role in *Dracula*; Marc Antony in *Cleopatra*; Snow King and Russian soloist in *The Nutcracker*; Rothbart in *Swan Lake*; lead roles in *Swing Swing Swing!*, *Paquita*, *DanceSport*, *Call it Off*, *On My Mother's Side*, and *Go West!*

Additional Highlights: featured guest artist in ballet productions throughout the United States; eighth season with Ballet Nebraska; founding company member

Ballet

N E B R A S K A

Apprentices

Nora Carr



Hometown: Burnt Hills, New York

Training & Experience: B.F.A. in dance from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music; Akjun Ballet Theatre; Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet

Summer Programs: American Ballet Theatre, Miami City Ballet, and Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet

Elena Carter



Hometown: Seattle, Washington

Training & Experience: B.F.A in dance from the University of Arizona; Pacific Northwest Ballet School

Summer Programs: Pacific Northwest Ballet, Alonzo King LINES Ballet, Perry Mansfield, Ballet Austin, Los Angeles Ballet, and Ballet Chicago

Kogan Murphy



Hometown: Chicago, Illinois

Training & Experience: Ballet Theatre of Indiana, Joffrey Ballet trainee, Judith Svalander School of Ballet, Miss Illinois talent scholarship

Summer Programs: Joffrey Ballet

Rachel Smith



Hometown: Plymouth, Massachusetts

Training & Experience: Nashville Ballet trainee, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre graduate program, Boston Ballet School

Summer Programs: Walnut Hill School of the Arts, Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, Miami City Ballet, Houston Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Nashville Ballet

Ballet

NEBRASKA

Whitney Walsh



Hometown: Westlake Village, California

Training & Experience: Joffrey Ballet trainee, California Dance Theatre, Pacific Festival Ballet

Summer Programs: Joffrey Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Houston Ballet, Kirov Academy of Ballet

Trainees

Emily Eisel

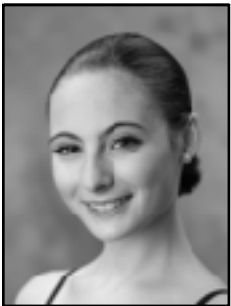


Hometown: Fairfax, Virginia

Training & Experience: Fairfax Ballet; Motion41 Dance, Ballet Nebraska II; Ballet Chicago Studio Company

Summer Programs: Motion41 Dance and Ballet Chicago

Katerina Schweitzer



Hometown: Vero Beach, Florida

Training & Experience: Space Coast Ballet Academy; Kirova Ballet Academy; private training by Heidi Khursandi; Gelsey Kirkland Ballet Academy Graduate; apprentice with Gelsey Kirkland Ballet

Summer Programs: American Ballet Theatre, Joffrey Ballet, Kirova Ballet Academy of Miami, Ballet Vero Beach, and Gelsey Kirkland Academy

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