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**YOUNG PERFORMERS ANNOUNCED FOR 'NUTCRACKER' CAST**

OMAHA, Neb. -- It's a long time until Christmas, but visions of sugarplums already are dancing in the heads of some 120 Omaha-area children chosen to perform in Ballet Nebraska's *The Nutcracker*.

Ballet Nebraska this week announced the results of auditions held July 16 to select the young cast members who will appear alongside the company's professional dancers in its performances of the classic holiday ballet. The performances will be December 2 at the Iowa Western Community College Arts Center in Council Bluffs, and December 4 at the Omaha Music Hall.

Two girls will share the role of Clara, the young heroine: Ashley Brown, age 12, daughter of Lans and Patricia Brown of Omaha, and Hannah Liu, age 10, daughter of Dr. James and Rebecca Liu of Omaha. Jack Tracy, age 11, son of Tom and Mary Anne Tracy of Omaha, will portray Clara's mischievous brother, Fritz.

Other community performers, ranging in age from 6 to adult, will dance roles including party guests, mice, toy soldiers, lambs, and a variety of other characters who come to life in Clara's imaginative dreams on Christmas Eve.

Ballet Nebraska artistic director Erika Overturff, who choreographed the company's production of *The Nutcracker*, said the young performers play a vital role in helping the ballet communicate.

"One thing that sets our *Nutcracker* apart is careful attention to clear storytelling," she said. "I've tried to make sure that even the youngest audience member can follow along and get involved in Clara's adventures. Seeing other children being part of the story on the stage helps children in the audience feel involved in the action. It makes the ballet seem more real, more exciting, and more fun to watch."

Ballet Nebraska's young *Nutcracker* performers will begin regular rehearsals in October. Information about the production is available online from **[balletnebraska.org](http://balletnebraska.org)**

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**[Note to editors:** Print-resolution photos of the youth auditions are available for download from [this link](#).]