

# Ballet

NEBRASKA

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 8, 2013

Print-quality photos are [available for download](#)

Contact: Erika Overturff, (402) 541-6946

### **THE NUTCRACKER: BALLET NEBRASKA ADDS NEW FEATURES TO HOLIDAY TRADITION**

OMAHA -- What's new in this year's edition of Ballet Nebraska's *The Nutcracker*?

Plenty, said artistic director Erika Overturff: a new Omaha venue, a special performance for early birds, cameo roles for canine guest stars, and more.

But its core appeal remains the same, she said: the beauty and athleticism of classical ballet, blended with a lively, entertaining story that celebrates the power of imagination.

"*The Nutcracker* is a cherished tradition for both dancers and audiences, and we stay true to that tradition," said Overturff, who choreographed Ballet Nebraska's production and dances in it as well. "We're always working to keep it lively and fresh -- in choreography, in casting, in the way we relate to each other onstage, and in the features we add to the production."

This year's new features include:

- **"Muttcracker" pups** – Overturff and the Nebraska Humane Society developed the "Muttcracker" program to promote the adoption of shelter pets. The party scene of each performance will feature a brief cameo appearance by one of four shelter dogs, specially selected by the society's animal behavior specialists for their calm stage presence. "My dog, Maggie, was a shelter pet, so I love the idea of helping other pets find homes," Overturff said.
- **Pre-Thanksgiving performance** – *Nutcracker* season opens early this year, with a special performance at 7:30 pm Saturday, November 23, at Council Bluffs' IWCC Arts Center. "The holidays are always hectic, so we wanted to help our fans by offering a chance to see *The Nutcracker* before the rush begins," Overturff said. Tickets are available from the Arts Center box office, 712-388-7140 or (800) 432-5852 ext. 7140.
- **Double vision** - Taking turns in the role of Clara this year are 11-year-old identical twin sisters Kalin and Katie Rice, daughters of Lori and Kevin Rice of Springfield. It's the first time twins have shared the role, Overturff said.
- **Orpheum debut** – After two seasons at the Omaha Music Hall, the ballet's Omaha performances will get a new home this year: the Orpheum Theater. "A beautiful performance deserves a beautiful setting, and the Orpheum is a wonderful home for our *Nutcracker*," Overturff said. Orpheum performances will be at 2 and 7:30 pm Saturday, December 7, and 2 pm Sunday, December 8. Tickets are available from Ticket Omaha at 402-345-0606; online from [ticketomaha.com](http://ticketomaha.com); or at the Ticket Omaha box office at 13th and Douglas.

*The Nutcracker* is sponsored by Omaha Steaks, with additional support provided by Douglas County, Anne Thorne Weaver, Nebraska Orthopaedic Hospital and OrthoWest. More information about Ballet Nebraska is available from the company's website at [balletnebraska.org](http://balletnebraska.org).

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***THE NUTCRACKER: QUICK FACTS***

**WHAT:** Ballet Nebraska's *The Nutcracker* is a fresh, lively and thoroughly entertaining version of the ballet that has become a family holiday tradition.

**WHO:** Ballet Nebraska is the region's only professional dance company. *The Nutcracker*, choreographed by founder and artistic director Erika Overturff, features the company's 18 professional dancers plus more than 120 student and community performers.

**WHEN AND WHERE:**

- 7:30 pm Saturday, November 23, at the IWCC Arts Center on the Iowa Western Community College campus in Council Bluffs. Tickets are available by calling the Arts Center box office at 712-388-7140 or (800) 432-5852 ext. 7140. Ticket prices are \$19, \$30, and \$45.
- 2 and 7:30 pm Saturday, December 7, and 2 pm Sunday, December 8, at Omaha's Orpheum Theater. Tickets are available from Ticket Omaha:

[www.ticketomaha.com](http://www.ticketomaha.com)

402-345-0606

Box office: 13th and Douglas Streets

Ticket prices are \$25, \$44, and \$59.

**SUPPORT:** *The Nutcracker* is sponsored by Omaha Steaks, with additional support provided by Douglas County, Anne Thorne Weaver, Nebraska Orthopaedic Hospital and OrthoWest.

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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 Piotr Tchaikovsky. The first American full-length production was by the San Francisco Ballet in 1944.
- 148:** Total number of performers – professional, student, community and canine – in this year’s Ballet Nebraska production.
- 99:** Combined years of professional dance experience among company members.
- 4:** Total number of public performances: 7:30 pm Saturday, November 23, at the IWCC Arts Center in Council Bluffs; and 2 and 7:30 pm Saturday, December 7, and 2 pm Sunday, December 8, 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.
- 3.58:** Average number of roles performed by a professional company member in a single performance.
- 238:** Number of specially-constructed costumes used in the production.
- 60 to 90:** Hours of hand labor required to make a professional tutu.
- 100:** Yards (the length of 1 football field) of ruffle needed to construct a tutu.
- 75:** Cost in dollars of one pair of professional-grade pointe shoes (each ballerina wears out many pairs by the end of *Nutcracker* season.)
- 8:** Number of legs on the Chinese dragon seen in Act II.
- 2:** Number of identical twins sharing the role of Clara.

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

November 8, 2013

Contact: Erika Overturff, (402) 541-6946

**BALLET NEBRASKA'S SEASON 4 COMPANY ARTISTS**

**Erika Overturff**

*Founder and Artistic Director [Artist Sponsor: Nebraska Orthopedic Hospital]*



Erika Overturff is the founder and artistic director of Ballet Nebraska, the state's professional ballet company. Under her leadership, Ballet Nebraska enriches the region 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, continuing her studies at summer programs including North Carolina School of the Arts, American Ballet Theatre, Pittsburgh Ballet Theater, and the Kirov Academy. 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. Erika has also been a faculty member and guest teacher for schools throughout 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 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* and *Cleopatra*. She also created Ballet Nebraska's lively and entertaining new version of the holiday favorite *The Nutcracker*, which has premiered to enthusiastic audiences both at home and on tour.

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## Matthew Carter

*Ballet Master [Artist Sponsor: Union Pacific]*



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. Omaha audiences have enjoyed Matthew in roles such as The Asp in Erika Overturff's *Cleopatra*, The White Rabbit in Kennet Oberly's *Alice In Wonderland*, and Puck in Oscar Antunez's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Also a choreographer, he has premiered works with numerous schools and professional companies, including *Bacchanale Variations*, *Signs of Life*, and *Sadako* 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 returns for his fourth season as ballet master.

## Erin Alarcón

*Company Dancer [Artist Sponsor: Clyde and Deborah Overturff]*



A native of New Jersey, Erin Alarcón received her dance training under Christine Taylor and Luba Gulyaeva of New Jersey Civic Youth Ballet. Erin earned her B.A. in dance performance at Mercyhurst College under the direction of Tauna Hunter. During summers she studied with Eglevsky Ballet and Joffrey Ballet. She has worked with a number of guest artists including Laura Alonso, Bruce Marks, Vivi Flindt, and Bill Evans. Erin has studied abroad with Valerie Valentine of the Dutch National Ballet, danced professionally with SoMar Dance Works and Ballet Concert, and has appeared as a guest artist with Iowa Dance Theater. She has performed the title roles in *Giselle*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Cinderella*. With Ballet Nebraska, she has been featured in Mikhail Fokine's *The Dying Swan*, as Fee in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and in lead roles in *The Nutcracker* and *Alice in Wonderland*. This is Erin's fourth season with the company.

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## Ryan Christopher

*Company Dancer*



Ryan Christopher grew up in Colorado playing baseball and football through high school. He received his classical ballet training at International Youth Ballet on a full scholarship under the tutelage of Mark Carlson and German Zamuel. Ryan also trained during summers at The Performing Arts Conservatory of Texas directed by H. Christopher Fairbank. Ryan previously danced with Denver's Ballet Ariel and Boulder Ballet where he performed soloist roles in classical repertory including *Le Corsaire*, *Les Sylphides*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Cinderella*, *The Nutcracker*, *Peter Pan*, *Giselle*, *Napoli*, *Beauty & the Beast*, *Les Patineurs*, and many neoclassical and modern works. Ryan has appeared as a guest artist throughout Colorado and around the United States. This is Ryan's first season with the company.

## Vivi DiMarco

*Company Dancer [Artist Sponsors: John Ritland and Greta Vaught]*



Hailing from the Chicago suburbs, Vivi DiMarco trained in ballet, modern, and Vaganova character dance at the School of DanceWest Ballet under the direction of Ricardo and Regina Moyano. While attending college, she continued to train at Hubbard Street's Lou Conte Dance Studio and the Ruth Page Center for the Arts. She also directed and choreographed for University Ballet, where she danced lead roles in student productions of *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, and *The Sleeping Beauty*. Vivi was a trainee at Joffrey Ballet, performing in trainee productions of *Paquita* and Gerald Arpino's *Birthday Variations*. She graduated with honors from the University of Chicago with a B.S. in chemistry. At Ballet Nebraska, Vivi has danced Spanish lead in *The Nutcracker*, Tweedledum in *Alice in Wonderland* and several pieces in *Momentum*. Vivi returns for her second season at Ballet Nebraska.

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## **Claire Goodwillie**

*Company Dancer*



Claire Goodwillie began her ballet training at Omaha Theater Ballet School of Dance. She spent summers training with the renowned Pacific Northwest Ballet and Ballet Austin. She also trained in Banff, Canada. Claire appeared in numerous Omaha Theater Ballet productions as both a student and apprentice, including *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Firebird*, and *Coppélia*. With Ballet Nebraska, her featured roles include Rat Queen and Dew Drop Fairy in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker*, Red Queen in Kennet Oberly's *Alice in Wonderland*, Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, vampire bride in Winthrop Corey's *Dracula*, and geisha in Matthew Carter's *Sadako*. She has performed several times with Opera Omaha and Omaha Symphony. Claire returns for her fourth season with the company.

## **Natasha Grimm Gregory**

*Company Dancer [Artist Sponsor: OrthoWest]*



Iowa native and Ballet Nebraska founding member Natasha Grimm Gregory has performed many leading roles including Sugar Plum Fairy, Snow Queen and Dew Drop Fairy in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker*, Titania in Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mina in Winthrop Corey's *Dracula*, the title role in Overturff's *Cleopatra* and featured roles in *Momentum* and *Alice in Wonderland*. She made her choreographic debut with *Cycles* in Ballet Nebraska's spring 2012 production of *Momentum*. Natasha studied during summers on scholarship with Kansas City Ballet and Manhattan Dance.

Natasha has previously danced professionally with Omaha Theater Ballet and performed with Opera Omaha and Omaha Symphony. She is also a dance instructor in a variety of genres. Natasha returns for her fourth season with the company.

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## **Alberto Liberatoscioli**

*Company Dancer [Artist Sponsor: Omaha Steaks]*



Originally from Italy, Alberto Liberatoscioli received his ballet training in the Vaganova and Balanchine styles while also studying modern dance. He was a member of Ballet of the National Theater in Brno, Czech Republic and Slovak National Ballet where he performed in classical repertory including *Le Corsaire*, *La Bayadère* and *Swan Lake*, as well as notable neoclassical works and operas. Alberto was also a company member at Columbia Classical Ballet in South Carolina and Omaha Theater Ballet. He was guest artist at Boulder Ballet, Ballet Fantastique, Lincoln Midwest Ballet and Iowa Dance Theater, dancing lead roles in *The Nutcracker*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *As You Like It* and *Cinderella*. Alberto is the creator and organizer of Midsummer Ballet Festival which brings U.S. ballet companies to his home city of San Benedetto del Tronto, Italy. Certified by American Ballet Theater of New York City, he is an active ballet instructor both locally and abroad. Alberto holds a law degree and a masters in Human Resources. He is the recipient of an Una Manciatà di Lettere literary award for his book *Ombre alla Ribalta*. Alberto has danced many featured roles in Ballet Nebraska productions including Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Russian Lead and Drosselmeyer in *The Nutcracker*, and Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland*. Alberto returns for his fourth season with the company.

## **Bret Samson**

*Company Dancer [Artist Sponsors: Sao Cheng Liu and Rebecca Huang]*



Bret Samson began her dance training at Lake Shore Dance with Amy Aichele and Gwen Agee in Saukville, Wisconsin, and later with Melissa Anderson and Rafael Delgado in Milwaukee. Bret continued her training at Steps on Broadway in New York City. She has previously performed with Milwaukee Ballet II, Madison Ballet and Omaha Theater Ballet. Bret has performed in works by noted choreographers Harrison McEldowney, Oskar Antunez, Winthrop Corey, Kennet Oberly, and Jean-Paul Commélin. A founding member of Ballet Nebraska, Bret has danced as White Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, Arabian and Chinese leads in *The Nutcracker* and featured roles in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Momentum* including Mikhail Fokine's *The Dying Swan* and *Sadako*. She has also danced in Opera Omaha productions. This is Bret's fourth season with the company.



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## **Kelsey Schwenker**

*Company Dancer [Artist Sponsor: RSVP]*



Boulder native Kelsey Schwenker began her classical ballet training with Ballet Nouveau of Colorado, where she was a five-year member of its student company directed by Julia Wilkinson Manley. She trained during summers with Kansas City Ballet, Burklyn Ballet Theatre, Boulder Jazz Dance Workshop and Paul Taylor Dance Company. Kelsey received her B.F.A. in ballet performance, graduating *summa cum laude* from the University of Oklahoma, where she trained with Mary Margaret Holt, Donn Edwards, Steve Brule and Jeremy Lindberg. Kelsey has performed in notable works including *Rodeo*, *Divertimento No. 5*, *The Firebird*, *Afternoon of a Faun* and *Les Biches*. With Ballet Nebraska, she has performed as Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* and featured roles in *Swing, Swing, Swing!*, *The Nutcracker*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Dracula* and *Momentum* – including Matthew Carter's *Bacchanale Variations* and *Sadako*. She is rehearsal director for Repertory Ensemble, the company's youth performance group. Kelsey returns for her fourth season with the company.

## **Katie van der Mars**

*Company Dancer*



Katie van der Mars is a graduate of the University of Utah, where she received her B.F.A. in ballet performance. She began her training in classical ballet at Corvallis Academy of Ballet in Corvallis, Oregon. Katie trained during summers with Atlanta Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, and Ballet West. During her time in Salt Lake City, she performed as a 3-year member of the university's resident company, Utah Ballet, where she danced in *Giselle*, *La Bayadere*, *Paquita*, the *pas de deux* from *Scheherazade*, *The Nutcracker*, *les Odaliques pas de trois* from *Le Corsaire*, *The Firebird*, Fokine's *Ruslan & Ludmilla*, and many contemporary works. At Ballet Nebraska, Katie has danced featured roles in Kennet Oberly's *Alice in Wonderland*, Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker* and Ballet Nebraska's mixed-repertory production *Momentum*. Katie returns for her second season at Ballet Nebraska.

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## **Sasha York**

*Company Dancer [Artist Sponsor: Children's Hospital and Medical Center]*



Originally from Chelyabinsk, Russia, Sasha York trained at Paavola School of Dance in Flint, Michigan. He later returned to Russia, where he trained with Urey Urivich. Sasha was accepted into the pre-professional program at Pittsburgh Ballet Theater, where he performed in company productions of *Don Quixote*, *The Nutcracker*, *Peter Pan*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. He has worked with many well-known choreographers such as Harrison McEldowney, Viktor Plotnikov and Septime Webre. With Ballet Nebraska, Sasha has performed as Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Marc Antony in *Cleopatra*, the title role in *Dracula*, Claude in *Swing, Swing, Swing!*, Cavalier and Snow King in *The Nutcracker*, and White Knight in *Alice in Wonderland*. He previously danced for two seasons at Omaha Theater Ballet. Sasha returns for his fourth season with the company.

## **Apprentices**

### **Bridget Carpenter**



Bridget graduated from Purchase College Conservatory of Dance at State University of New York with a B.F.A. in dance performance. She danced George Balanchine's *Serenade* at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival and Nacho Duato's works while in Madrid, Spain. She also performed at Association of Performing Arts Presenters dance festival in New York City. Originally from Oak Park, California, Bridget trained at California Dance Theatre where she performed several leading roles with Pacific Festival Ballet. Bridget continued her studies at notable summer dance programs including San Francisco Ballet, Miami City Ballet, North Carolina School of the Arts, State Street Ballet and Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance. She performed corps de ballet roles as a Ballet Nebraska trainee in *The Nutcracker*, *Momentum*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. Bridget returns to the company this season as a first-year apprentice.

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## Jessica Mariner



Jessica is a graduate of University of Utah where she earned a B.F.A. from the department of ballet. Jessica began her classical ballet training in Chicago. She was a member of studio companies at Salt Creek Ballet and Ballet Chicago. Jessica was also a member of Utah Ballet, the resident performing company of the University of Utah. Jessica has performed in numerous classical ballets including *Giselle*, *La Bayadere*, *Paquita*, and George Balanchine's *Serenade*. At Ballet Nebraska, she has performed in *The Nutcracker*, *Alice in Wonderland* and several works featured in *Momentum*. Jessica returns to the company as a second-year apprentice this season.

## Danielle Pite



Danielle began her classical ballet training at Boulder Ballet School. She graduated with honors from Smith College in Northampton, MA with a double major in dance and chemistry. Danielle trained during summers through Arts Umbrella at Ballet British Columbia, Alonzo King's LINES Ballet, American Repertory Ballet, Kansas City Ballet and Briansky Ballet. She performed leading roles in a variety of works with Five Colleges Dance Department, including Rodger Blum's *Sonnets of the Broken Hearted*, Merce Cunningham's *MinEvents*, Mark Morris's *Gloria*, and Megan McCool's *Interplay in G Minor*. Danielle choreographed and performed for three years with Celebrations Dance Company, the student dance company at Smith College. She performed as a trainee in Ballet Nebraska's *Momentum*, *The Nutcracker*, and was featured in Kennet Oberly's *Alice in Wonderland* as the March Hare. Danielle returns this season as a first-year apprentice.

## Emma Raker



Originally from Santa Fe, Emma trained in classical ballet at the School of Performing Arts at the National Dance Institute of New Mexico where she performed several leading roles created by Jefferson Baum and Russell Baker. Emma previously studied at the Moving People School, Celtic de Santa Fe Irish Dance School and McTeggart School. Emma spent summers training at Saratoga Summer Dance Intensive, LINES Ballet and Hubbard Street Dance. She continued her studies in San Francisco at Alonzo King LINES Ballet Training Program with renowned teachers Alonzo King, Arturo Fernandez, Maurya Kerr, Duncan Cooper, Sidra Bell and Karah Abiog. Emma also choreographed for her peers while studying at LINES. She has performed in Erika Overtuff's *The Nutcracker*, Kennet Oberly's *Alice in Wonderland* and Ballet Nebraska's mixed-repertory production, *Momentum*. Emma is a second-year apprentice at Ballet Nebraska.

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## **Anna Swenson**



Anna began her classical ballet training at Theater Ballet of Spokane, Washington, where she performed in original works by choreographers Charles Askegard, Dodie Askegard and Deidre A. Kellogg among others. She studied during summers at Walnut Hill School for the Arts, Joffrey Ballet's Jazz and Contemporary program, and School of Alberta Ballet in Calgary, Canada. Anna has appeared in local productions of touring company shows including Moscow Ballet's *The Sleeping Beauty* and Ballet Memphis' *The Nutcracker*. She joined the trainee program at School of Alberta Ballet in 2012, performing in Aram Manukyan's *The Nutcracker* and in Yukichi Hattori's *Numbers*. This is Anna's first season as an apprentice with Ballet Nebraska.

## ***Trainee***

### **Chloe Watson**



Purchase College, State University of New York – B.F.A. in Dance Performance  
Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Dallas, TX  
Dallas Ballet Center, Dallas, TX.