



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 11, 2011

Contact: Erika Overturff, (402) 541-6946

**ROMANTIC, CHILLING 'DRACULA' OPENS BALLETS NEBRASKA'S SECOND SEASON**

OMAHA -- He's evil, drinks blood, and sleeps in a coffin. Could there really be more to Count Dracula than those Halloween clichés?

Yes, says Ballet Nebraska in *Dracula*, its season-opening performance at 8 pm October 28 at Omaha's Orpheum Theater. The ballet portrays the vampire count as both a monster and as a man with emotions and vulnerabilities, choreographer Winthrop Corey said.

Corey, artistic director of Alabama's Mobile Ballet, said he began the creative process by reading both Bram Stoker's classic 1897 horror novel and scholars' commentaries about it. His research raised a question in his mind: *What made Dracula who he was?*

"Bram Stoker never told us how Dracula got to be a vampire," he said. "I say that he is a man who, through circumstances we don't know, is turned into a monster. Yet he is still a man inside this monster's body, who can kill, but who can also fall in love. And therein lies the ballet; I designed it around that."

To develop the choreography, Corey said, he started with the relationship between Count Dracula and the novel's two key female characters: the flirtatious Lucy and her more insightful best friend, Mina.

"What I did was narrow it down to three characters -- Lucy, Mina and Dracula -- and the difference between his relationship with Lucy and his relationship with Mina," he said. "One of them he kills and makes a vampire bride; the other one he actually falls in love with. And that's his downfall."

"Really, no one in the ballet is all good or all evil," said Ballet Nebraska artistic director Erika Overturff, who dances the role of Lucy. "Every character has different dynamics. I think the audience can feel some empathy with all of them."

And while *Dracula* has plenty of chills – from vampire attacks to a chase through a darkened crypt – Corey said that the most unexpected surprise for audiences is something quite different.

"In Mobile, we didn't get anybody in the beginning," he said. "People were afraid to bring their kids. But word of mouth got around: 'This is so beautiful! You've got to go see it because it's beautiful!'"

"I didn't want blood and gore, because I've seen versions with blood and gore. That's not me, and that's not what I wanted to say. I wanted a classic ballet that's very romantic."

Tickets for Ballet Nebraska's *Dracula* are available through Ticket Omaha by visiting the box office on 13th & Douglas streets, by phone at 402-345-0606, or online at [ticketomaha.com](http://ticketomaha.com).

*Dracula* is sponsored by John and Gayla Thal and is presented with the support of the Iowa West Foundation, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Special student performances October 6 and 7 were presented at the IWCC Arts Center. Information about the production is available from Ballet Nebraska's website, [balletnebraska.org](http://balletnebraska.org)

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[**Editors:** Downloadable photos are [here](#). Short audio clips of interviews with cast members are [here](#).]

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## **BIO: WINTHROP COREY, GUEST CHOREOGRAPHER**

**Winthrop Corey** is artistic director of Mobile Ballet Company, and a summer faculty member for both Joffrey Ballet School in New York and American Ballet Theatre. A former principal dancer with Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet and The National Ballet of Canada, he is especially well known for his classical roles in *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, and *Cinderella*, and for dancing opposite Rudolph Nureyev in Jose Limon's classic modern-dance work *The Moor's Pavane*.

Corey has been a four-time coach for the New York International Ballet Competition, and a guest teacher at institutions throughout the United States, Canada, and Portugal. He has staged and choreographed full-length productions of *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Cinderella*, and *Swan Lake* as well as two original ballets, *Dracula* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

As a costume designer, Corey is noted for his designs for *Swan Lake*, *Cinderella*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Romeo & Juliet*. His original design and construction of the classical tutu has gained him national attention.

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## **DRACULA: PROGRAM NOTES**

(Notes by Winthrop Corey, choreographer and designer)

### **The Story of *Dracula***

*Dracula, for centuries a victim, a man changed by circumstances far beyond comprehension into a sinister character of pride, cruelty and cunning, aristocratic arrogance and a brooding sense of grievance and entitlement.*

The character of Dracula is a brilliant creation, and no other setting can match the disquieting, terrifying magnificence of Transylvania, where the wolves howl at night, bats wing low and heavy doors slam shut. These two features, character and setting, are Bram Stoker's enduring contribution to the vampire tale. In a stroke of genius, Stoker took a person who really lived in the 15th century (Prince Vlad II) and a real place (Transylvania, in what is now western Romania) and fused them with folklore. The result is a "sinister character of disquieting force," and a setting that is wonderfully eerie and remote.

### **Act I, Scene I: The Castle**

Jonathan Harker travels from London to Transylvania and the castle of Count Dracula with papers that must be signed to complete real estate dealings. In the course of his visit, he becomes an intended victim and is drugged by Count Dracula. Three of Dracula's brides, themselves vampires, taunt him until Dracula reappears and sends them away. Dracula then, unsuccessfully, tries to bite his victim, thus turning him into a vampire, but Jonathan escapes and flees back to London to his fiancée, Mina.

### **Act I, Scene II: A Masquerade Ball**

A masquerade ball is the setting for Jonathan's and Mina's wedding reception, where guests in fanciful costumes waltz to the familiar strains of Strauss, and a band of Gypsies comes to entertain. As guests arrive, so does a mysterious guest dressed in black: Count Dracula. As it is a masked ball, his identity is unknown. He first encounters Lucy, Mina's favorite friend, and is taken with her extraordinary beauty and gaiety. As they begin to dance, his gaze happens to fall upon Mina, and he is struck by her purity and grace. Unable to get close to her, he turns his attention back to Lucy. After the guests have left the ball, Lucy returns to retrieve her mask, and happens upon Dracula. He weaves upon her his spell that ends with a bite, leaving her as if dead. Mina and Jonathan return to find her lying on the ballroom floor.

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## **Act II, Scene I: A Funeral Procession**

Led by Mina and Jonathan, a funeral procession is taking Lucy to her final resting place. Waiting for them is Count Dracula, who has come to claim his new bride. Shrinking back in horror, the men are unable to stop him from taking the body of Lucy. They vow to catch him, saving Lucy, and travel after him to his castle in Transylvania.

## **Act II, Scene II: The Castle**

Count Dracula has brought Lucy to the castle, where she is surrounded by his other brides and is slowly brought to life as a vampire. Hearing the approaching band of men, the brides and Dracula vanish. Jonathan, along with his men, prepares to search the castle for Dracula and leaves Mina alone. Lucy appears and begins to initiate Mina, who is intended to become Dracula's next bride. When finally Dracula and Mina meet, he realizes his love for her. His natural instincts are to make her his bride, but because of his true love he is unable to. Jonathan, accompanied by his men, storms into the room in an attempt to save her.

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## **DRACULA: QUOTES FROM THE CAST**

*Sasha York [Dracula] on how he prepared to portray his character:*

I learned the choreography and watched the video multiple times, and Winthrop threw in a couple of suggestions. I thought about it, and I think he kind of let me grow a bit above that, making it my own so I'd feel comfortable with it.

Whenever I'm onstage I'm going through a story in my mind: what I'm doing, what I'm thinking, why I'm feeling this way. If I get goosebumps, so should the audience.

*Winthrop Corey [choreographer] on Sasha York's portrayal:*

I've done this for five different Draculas, and they've all been extremely different. When you give somebody a role like that, you have to let them take it... but then you also have to be in control of it.

What I said to Sasha was, when you bring your hands this way [makes a palms-up gesture] you don't have to bring them here to smell them; we know what you're doing. Everybody in the audience 'gets it.' So to go overboard and be too realistic with something, you don't have to do that. You can just stand there, and we know exactly what's going on.

What he [Sasha] has done is found the balance between gesture that might be too big, or might be nothing at all; he's found the middle ground. He's done a beautiful job with that, and that's the mark of an artist: To be able to stand onstage, do nothing, but we know what's going on. He's really capturing that.

*Natasha Grimm [Mina Harker] on how she prepared to portray her role:*

I have a whole dialog in my head. It changes from performance to performance. In the wedding, I'm getting married, and I'm not as afraid of Dracula; I'm more thinking, 'Who is he?' I'm kind of intrigued, but yet have this feeling inside where I kind of want to know him more, but I shouldn't. I have all my family here, and I'm getting married, and I'm supposed to be so pure, but I kind of want to, you know, test the waters... [laughter]

*Winthrop Corey [choreographer] on Natasha Grimm's portrayal:*

It's more complicated than really anybody else. Lucy is a given: She'll flirt with anybody. With Mina, we had to work with this; she was doing it like she was terrified of him immediately. We talked, and I said, 'No; he's a stranger, and you're shy. He's very good-looking; you're not terrified. You don't give away what's going to happen.'

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## BALLET NEBRASKA 2011-12 COMPANY BIOS

### Erika Overturff

Artistic Director & Founder (Artist Sponsor: [Midlands Choice](#))



Erika Overturff is the founder and artistic director of Ballet Nebraska. 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 Theater, Pittsburgh Ballet Theater, and the Kirov Academy. Erika earned her BFA 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. As part of Ballet Nebraska's collaboration with Joslyn Art Museum for *Momentum*, she recently choreographed the ballet *Connemara* and is creating a new ballet *Cleopatra*. Additionally, Erika created Ballet Nebraska's lively and entertaining new version of the holiday favorite *The Nutcracker*, which will debut to Omaha-area audiences this December.

### Matthew Carter

Ballet Master (Artist Sponsor: John & Gayla Thal)



Matthew Carter began his training with Sharon Filone at the Lake Erie Ballet School and Sandra Barnett at Little's Dance Studio. He went on to study on 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 also performed as a Guest Artist with Hawaii Ballet Theatre, Neglia Ballet Artists, and Ballet Tucson. Matthew has been choreographing since the age of 16 and has premiered works with numerous schools, professional companies, and theaters. He 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 second season at Ballet Nebraska as ballet master.

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## **Erin Alarcón**

Company Dancer



A native of New Jersey, Erin Alarcón received her dance training under Christine Taylor and Luba Gulyaeva of New Jersey Civic Youth Ballet, where she performed a number of classic roles and contemporary works. Erin earned her Bachelor of Arts in dance performance at Mercyhurst College under the direction of Tauna Hunter. During the summers, she studied with Eglevsky Ballet and The Joffrey Ballet. She has worked with a number of guest artists including Laura Alonso, Bruce Marks, Vivi Flindt, and Bill Evans. Erin has also studied abroad with Valerie Valentine of the Dutch National Ballet. Erin previously danced professionally with SoMar Dance Works and Ballet Concerto. She performed leading roles in both *Giselle* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, as well as solo roles in Ballet Nebraska's *Momentum* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Erin is returning for her second season with Ballet Nebraska.

## **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 has 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*. Her favorite roles include young Clara in *The Orpheum Nutcracker*, Evil Rat Queen in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker*, as well as Helena in Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Claire was featured in the role of Sugar Plum Fairy in a Christmas production at Omaha Theater Company. She has also performed with Opera Omaha and Omaha Symphony. Claire is a founding member returning for her second season at Ballet Nebraska.

## **Natasha Grimm**

Company Dancer (Artist Sponsor: John Ritland & Greta Vaught)



Natasha Grimm began her ballet training at Omaha Theater Ballet School of Dance. She also received a scholarship to Kansas City Ballet, and toured with Manhattan Dance. Additionally, Natasha danced in productions with Omaha Symphony and Opera Omaha. Natasha began her professional career at Omaha Theater Ballet where she danced first as an apprentice, and later as a company member for three seasons. She was dubbed by Examiner.com as "one of the most lithe and physically appealing dancers to grace the stage" in her role of Coral Snake in Omaha Theater Ballet's final production, *The Rainforest*. A founding member of Ballet Nebraska, Natasha has performed lead roles, including Sugar Plum Fairy in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker* and Titania in Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Natasha returns for her second season with Ballet Nebraska. [More about Natasha...](#)



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## **Alberto Liberatoscioli**

Company Dancer (Artist Sponsor: Clyde & Deborah Overturff)



Originally from Italy, Alberto Liberatoscioli received his ballet training in the Vaganova and Balanchine styles, also studying modern dance. He was a member of 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 neoclassical works and opera premieres. Alberto also danced with Columbia Classical Ballet in South Carolina, and later Omaha Theater Ballet. He appeared as a guest artist at Boulder Ballet, Ballet Fantastique and Lincoln Midwest Ballet dancing lead roles in *The Nutcracker*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and as Lando in *As You Like It*. Alberto received his teaching certification from American Ballet Theater in New York City and has taught master classes in Rome. He has also taught dance to students in Omaha and Lincoln. Alberto holds a law degree and a masters in Human Resources. He recently won first prize in the 2010 Una Manciatà di Lettere literature contest in Taranto, Italy for his book *Ombre alla Ribalta*. Most recently, Alberto performed solo roles in *Momentum*, *The Nutcracker* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Ballet Nebraska, where he is a founding member returning for his second season.

## **Bret Samson**

Company Dancer (Artist Sponsor: Dr. James Liu & Rebecca Liu-Huang)



Bret Samson began her dance training at Lake Shore Dance with Amy Aichele and Gwen Agee in Saukville, Wisconsin. She continued training with Melissa Anderson and Rafael Delgado in Milwaukee, where she later became a founding member of their performance group. Bret continued to complete her training at Steps on Broadway in New York City. Bret has performed in numerous ballets by accomplished choreographers, dancing roles in Harrison McEldowney's *Swing, Swing, Swing!* and Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as well as works by Kenneth Oberly and Jean-Paul Commélin. Bret has performed with Milwaukee Ballet II, Madison Ballet and Omaha Theater Ballet. A founding member of Ballet Nebraska, Bret returns for her second season.

## **Kelsey Schwenker**

Company Dancer



Boulder, Colorado native Kelsey Schwenker began her classical ballet training with Ballet Nouveau Colorado, where she was a five-year member of its student company directed by Julia Wilkinson Manley. She has attended summer intensives with Kansas City Ballet, Brooklyn Ballet Theatre, Boulder Jazz Dance Workshop and Paul Taylor Dance Company. Kelsey received her Bachelor of Fine Arts 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*. Kelsey returns for her second season with Ballet Nebraska. [More about Kelsey...](#)



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## Denis Vezetiu

Company Dancer



Born in Moldova in Eastern Europe, Denis Vezetiu received his professional training at the Academy of Ballet of Moldova. He went on to dance with a number of prestigious companies. He danced as a soloist with the National Opera of Bucharest and the National Theatre of Moldova. As a dancer with Chisinau National Theatre, Denis toured extensively in Europe and the United States. His varied repertoire includes *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Coppélia*, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, *Le Corsaire* and *La Bayadère*. Since 2008, Denis served as a principal dancer with Manassas Ballet in Virginia, performing leading roles in a variety of classical and original ballets. This is his first season with Ballet Nebraska.

## Sasha York

Company Dancer (Artist Sponsor: [OrthoWest](#))



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. Sasha performed the lead role in McEldowney's *Swing, Swing, Swing!*, Snow King in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker*, and Oberon in Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He previously danced for two seasons at Omaha Theater Ballet. Sasha joined Ballet Nebraska in 2010 as a founding member and returns for his second season. [More about Sasha...](#)

## Angela Zolczynski

Company Dancer (Artist Sponsor: J. Michael Hemmer)



A native of Rapid City, South Dakota, Angela Zolczynski is a graduate of the prestigious Walnut Hill School for the Arts in Natick, Massachusetts. She received her ballet training from Michael Owen of American Ballet Theater. Angela performed with Omaha Theater Ballet for six seasons, dancing in numerous works including *The Firebird*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Coppélia*. Angela has performed many soloist roles, including her recent portrayal of Hermia in Oskar Antunez' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A dedicated instructor, Angela has taught ballet, jazz, and tap in Omaha for seven years, and she also currently leads youth rehearsals for Repertory Ensemble. Angela is a founding member of Ballet Nebraska returning for her second season.

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## **Teresa Coulter**

Apprentice



Teresa began her dance training at Mary Lorraine's Dance Center in Omaha. She also trained at Omaha Academy of Ballet and Motion41 Dance. Teresa spent summers training with Kansas City Ballet, the prestigious North Carolina School of the Arts, and Kaatsbaan International Dance in Tivoli, New York. Teresa was a founding member of Ballet Nebraska II in the Company's debut season. She has danced company roles as Miss May in the Calendar Girls scene in Harrison McEldowney's *Swing, Swing, Swing!* and in the flower corps during Waltz of the Flowers in Erika Overturff's *The Nutcracker*. Teresa joins Ballet Nebraska this season as a first-year apprentice.

## **Mandy Lock**

Apprentice



Mandy is a recent graduate of the University of Utah where she earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in ballet performance. She began her training in classical ballet and acro-gymnastics in her home state of Missouri. She was a member of resident performing companies Utah Ballet and Character Dance Ensemble. Mandy also appeared professionally as a guest artist with Aspen Santa Fe Ballet in 2008. Mandy has toured internationally in Japan and Costa Rica, as well as extensively throughout the state of Utah. She has performed in a range of classical repertory including, *Swan Lake*, *Cinderella*, *La Bayadère*, *Giselle* and *The Firebird*, as well as numerous contemporary works. Mandy joins Ballet Nebraska this season as an apprentice.

## **Andrea Mason**

Apprentice



Chesterfield, Missouri native Andrea received her classical ballet training at St. Louis Ballet School with Gen Horiuchi and Ellen Costanza. She performed as a student apprentice in numerous roles in *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker* with St. Louis Ballet. Andrea received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance, with a dual emphasis in ballet and modern from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance in May 2011. Andrea appeared in Anthony Tudor's *Dark Elegies*, Bernard Gaddis's *Deitas* as a principal, as well as *Les Petits Riens* by Gen Horiuchi, *Shostakovich Jazz Suite* by Ron Tice, and *Untitled* by Thaddeus Davis. During summers, she studied with Nashville Ballet, Carolina Ballet, Kansas City Ballet, Ballet Chicago and St. Louis Ballet. Andrea appeared professionally in 2010 as guest artist for Dimensions Dance Theater as Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*. She also taught advanced classical ballet for two years at Creative Arts Academy. This is Andrea's first year as an apprentice with Ballet Nebraska.