

Ballet

N E B R A S K A

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 15, 2014

Contact: Erika Overturff (Founder and Artistic Director), (402) 541-6946

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

BALLET NEBRASKA OPENS SEASON 5 WITH LANDMARK 'GISELLE'

OMAHA -- Ballet Nebraska will open its fifth anniversary season October 4 at Omaha's Orpheum Theater with *Giselle* — a landmark ballet of the Romantic Era that is both a poignant love story and a chilling tale of vengeful ghosts, artistic director Erika Overturff said.

"*Giselle* helped put ballet at the center of the Romantic movement," Overturff said. "When it premiered at the Paris Opéra in 1841, it showed what could be accomplished when a dramatist, a choreographer, a dancer and a composer worked together as a tight-knit creative team. It demonstrated to everyone, inside the dance world and out, the power of integrating art forms into a work of total theater."

Overturff summarized the plot: Act I introduces Giselle, a charming peasant girl being courted by a handsome neighbor — who actually is a nobleman in disguise, and is already engaged to an aristocrat. When Giselle's jealous ex-boyfriend reveals the deception, the shock is too much for her; she collapses mentally and dies of a sudden heart seizure. But that's only the beginning of the story. In Act II, Giselle's spirit rises from her grave and faces a choice: to forgive her betrayer, or to join the Wilis — beautiful but deadly ghosts who haunt the forest — to hunt him down and take her revenge.

"*Giselle* is a dream role for a ballerina," Overturff said. "It draws on all her skills as an actress and as a dancer: transitioning from a carefree country girl, to a heartbroken madwoman, to an ethereal spirit. The rest of the ballet is filled with variety, with scenes ranging from colorful peasant dances to ghostly apparitions. The music, the action, and the drama sweep you along like a movie."

Giselle's enduring appeal, Overturff said, is that its emotions are utterly authentic.

"Everyone can relate to the feelings these characters experience: the excitement of falling in love, the sting of jealousy, the heartache of betrayal, the weight of guilt and grief," she said. "We've all been hurt by someone we care about - and have had to decide whether to hold a grudge or to forgive."

Omaha Steaks is the Season Sponsor for Ballet Nebraska's Season 5. Major support for *Giselle* is provided by the Iowa West Foundation, with additional support by the Lincoln Financial Foundation, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

Ballet Nebraska is the region's professional dance company. Tickets for *Giselle* are available from Ticket Omaha at ticketomaha.com, by calling 402-345-0606, or by visiting the box office at 13th and Dodge Streets. Information about Ballet Nebraska is available at balletnebraska.org.

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GISELLE FACT SHEET

The basics: First produced in 1841 at the Paris Opéra, *Giselle* was an immediate hit. It was performed throughout Europe and in the United States, where Augusta Maywood -- one of the first great American ballerinas -- danced the title role. Co-choreographer Jules Perrot later took it to Imperial Russia; his successor, the great Marius Petipa, continued to adapt and refine the ballet. Recorded in the Stepanov notation system, his version became the inspiration for most *Giselle* productions seen today.

Ballet Nebraska's version is being staged by Michelle Starbuck, formerly of the National Ballet of Canada, assisted by Judith Leppek, formerly of Ballet Arizona. They have drawn on their experience with many *Giselle* productions to craft a version that takes full advantage of the Ballet Nebraska dancers' artistic and interpretive strengths.

The times: France in 1841 was economically prosperous but socially discontented. The past half-century had seen the Revolution, the Reign of Terror, and the rise and fall of Napoleon. France was now a constitutional monarchy, ruled by a king and an elected parliament. But the first king, Charles X, had been driven from office by street protests after he tried to grant too much power to the aristocracy. His replacement, Louis-Philippe I, came from a branch of the royal family that had supported the Revolution. Hard-working and unpretentious, he was nicknamed "the citizen king" -- known for such habits as walking the streets carrying his own umbrella, which would have been unthinkable for previous French monarchs.

Most of the French, though, considered Louis-Philippe and his regime too dull. Society was divided into bitterly opposed factions that yearned to return to the glories of the old monarchy, the Revolution, or the Napoleonic Empire. One place they turned for excitement was the Paris Opéra, the state-run theater complex that served as the home for France's best in grand opera and ballet.

The arts: Since the early 1800s, European art had been swept by a loosely-defined trend called the Romantic movement. The previously dominant Neoclassic era had glorified the values of rationality, order, and serenity. The Romantics rejected those values, saying artists should be free to express strong, passionate feelings of every kind. Romantic artists tended to be interested in mysticism, folk legends, supernatural creatures, and exotic locales.

La Sylphide, an 1832 ballet about a Scotsman's doomed pursuit of a forest sprite, had helped establish ballet as a primary force in the Romantic movement, and Opéra audiences welcomed story ballets about mystical creatures and peasant superstitions.

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The team: **Jules Perrot** had been a brilliantly talented dancer at the Opéra, but left in 1835 to tour Europe's dance capitals. In Naples he discovered **Carlotta Grisi**, a gifted young ballerina who had been performing professionally since the age of 10. After coaching her and presenting her in a successful debut in London, he brought her to Paris with the goal of establishing her at the Opéra.

The Opéra management — perhaps still a bit miffed about Perrot's 1835 departure — agreed to mount a new ballet with Grisi as its star, but insisted on a condition: Perrot could be involved, but in-house choreographer **Jean Coralli** would receive sole credit. Coralli did create the group dances, but it became an open secret in the press that Perrot had choreographed all of Grisi's solos. Still, only Coralli's name appeared in the official credits — a tradition that continues at the Opéra to this day.

Théophile Gautier was a Romantic poet, a critic, and a ballet fan. He was infatuated with Carlotta Grisi, and hoped to give her a ballet scenario that would establish her as a star at the Opéra. Reading a poem about the German legend of the Wilis -- girls who haunted the forest after dying of broken hearts -- convinced him these creatures would be an ideal basis for a Romantic ballet. He shared his idea with a friend, dramatist **Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges**, who offered to collaborate with him. By working together, the two men were able to combine Gautier's poetic imagination with Saint-Georges' knowledge of how to make stories and characters work onstage.

Adolphe Adam was a young composer who already had done some music for the Opéra when he was asked to work on the new ballet. He collaborated closely with Perrot and Grisi -- recalling in his memoirs that much of the ballet had been created in his drawing room, where he would try out music on the piano while Perrot and Grisi fitted it to choreography.

Adam's score for the new ballet was innovative. Previously it had been typical for a ballet composer to produce a score by blending folk tunes, dance themes, and incidental music. Instead, Adam created his new work as an integrated composition that reinforced the story, much like a modern movie score. He also introduced to ballet the *leitmotif*, a recurring musical theme associated with a particular character or idea. (The music that plays in the *Star Wars* films whenever Darth Vader appears is a familiar modern example of a leitmotif.)

The work of all these individuals came together to produce *Giselle*.

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The story:

The time is the late 1700s, and the place is the rural wine country of Germany -- at that time a loose federation of small dukedoms and principalities, with old beliefs and traditions about forest spirits and mystical creatures still widespread. Small communities of peasants tend the vineyards; land and wealth are controlled by families of nobles.

One of these is Prince Albrecht, son of the Duke of Silesia. He is promised in an arranged marriage to Bathilde, a politically important aristocrat. But Albrecht is a bit of a dreamer, and he has become smitten with Giselle, a sweet and beautiful peasant girl. He has even created a false identity — a peasant farmer named Loys — so he can court her. Albrecht's squire, Wilfred, warns him that this masquerade can only end in disaster, but Albrecht is too infatuated with Giselle to think about the future.

Giselle lives in a cottage with her mother, a glove-maker. A childhood illness has left her with a weak heart, and she is too frail to tend the vineyards; instead she works as a seamstress. Cheerful and good-natured, she is loved by everyone. Her favorite pastime is dancing with her friends, and her mother often has to warn her not to let her love of dancing strain her heart.

Giselle's former beau is Hilarion, a gamekeeper (a position something like a modern forest ranger.) Good-hearted but hot-tempered, he is both jealous and suspicious of Loys. Once, when an argument between the two gets physical, he notices that his rival instinctively reaches for a sword — a weapon that only nobles are permitted to carry. Hilarion sees a chance to win Giselle back by finding out Loys' true identity.

But such things are far from Giselle's mind in Act I, as she enjoys the happiest day of her life. Loys (completely forgetting his existing engagement as Albrecht) has asked her to marry him; her friends have crowned her queen of the grape harvest festival; and a hunting party of nobles has brought excitement by visiting her village. One of the noble ladies takes a particularly kindly interest in her, and Giselle can have no way of knowing that this is Bathilde, Albrecht's future wife.

Hilarion shatters the mood. He has searched Loys' cottage and found Albrecht's sword: proof, he says, that Loys is an impostor. When Loys fights back, Hilarion blows a hunting horn, summoning the nobles' hunting party to return. Bathilde recognizes Albrecht immediately, even in his disguise as Loys, and demands an explanation — but he has nothing to say.

In moments, Giselle's happy day turns to horror. Realizing she has been betrayed — the first betrayal she has ever experienced in her gentle life — she flies into hysteria and loses her grip on reason. Tragically, she re-enacts the happy moments she had enjoyed with Loys. The emotional strain is too much for her weak heart, and she falls dead in her mother's arms. Stricken with grief and anger, Hilarion and Albrecht blame each other, until Wilfred convinces Albrecht to leave. Her friends mourn for Giselle as the curtain falls, ending Act I.

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Act II opens in a forest glade, where a simple cross marks Giselle's grave. It is midnight, and Myrtha appears. She is the Queen of the Wilis -- beautiful but deadly ghosts who haunt the forest. With the myrtle boughs that channel her magical powers, she summons the Wilis, and calls Giselle to rise from her grave and join them. Giselle obeys the summons and dances at Myrtha's command.

Later, when the Wilis have dispersed, a grief-stricken Albrecht comes into the glade to lay flowers on Giselle's grave. Separated from the Wilis, Giselle appears. At first Albrecht can only sense her presence, but gradually she becomes visible to him. Her gentle manner makes him realize that she has forgiven him, and they join in an ethereal but tender dance.

Meanwhile, the other Wilis capture Hilarion, who also had come into the forest to bring flowers to Giselle's grave. He pleads for mercy, but Myrtha decrees that he must dance until he dies. Her dark magic compels him to dance until he is weak from exhaustion, and he is helpless to save himself when the Wilis cast him into a river. The Wilis disperse again to seek another victim.

Soon they return, this time accompanied by Giselle, with Albrecht in captivity. Myrtha decrees that he, too, must dance until he dies — but Giselle defies her, stepping in front of Albrecht to protect him. She can't prevent Myrtha from forcing him to dance — but by dancing with him and supporting him, she enables him to hold out until dawn, when the Wilis lose their power and must return to their graves.

Giselle, too, must leave at dawn. But her defiance has broken Myrtha's power over her, and she can rest forever in peace. Albrecht is left alone as the sun rises, humbled by the memory of the simple peasant girl whose forgiving heart saved his life.

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BALLET NEBRASKA'S SEASON 5 COMPANY ARTISTS

Erika Overturff

Founder and Artistic Director



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 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. 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*. Other featured works include *Tropico* and the exuberant new *Party Animals*. 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.

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Matthew Carter

Ballet Master



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 *Coppelia*, 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*, *Sadako* and *Poseidon* 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 fifth season as ballet master.

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. 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 leading roles in *The Nutcracker* and *Alice in Wonderland*. She also serves as Ballet Nebraska's operations manager. This is Erin's fifth 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. With Ballet Nebraska, Ryan has performed featured roles in ballets such as *Snow White*, *Momentum*, and *The Nutcracker*. He has appeared as a guest artist throughout Colorado and around the United States. This is Ryan's second season with the company.

Vivi DiMarco

Company Dancer



Hailing from Chicago, 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, Vivi 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 featured roles in *The Nutcracker*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Les Odalisques*. Vivi returns for her third 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 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 fifth season with the company.

Natasha Grimm Gregory

*Company Dancer**



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*, title roles in *Cleopatra* and *Snow White*, as well as 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.

**On leave of absence.*

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Stephen James

Company Dancer [New for Season 5]



A native New Yorker, Stephen James trained at School of American Ballet in New York City and American Dance Theater in Herricks, NY. He studied at Ailey School as a fellowship student and graduated from State University of New York (SUNY) Purchase College in White Plains, NY with a BFA in dance. Stephen spent summers training with Miami City Ballet, Alonzo King's Lines Ballet, Ballet Austin, and Dance International New York in Spain and New York. He performed with Kazuko Hirabayashi Dance Theater, apprenticed with Staatstheater Nürnberg Ballett in Nuremberg, Germany and danced as a member of the second company at Ballet Hispanico. Stephen has also performed with the Eglevsky Ballet, RG Dance Project, and was most recently a company dancer with VERB BALLETS of Cleveland, Ohio. This is Stephen's first season with Ballet Nebraska.

Bret Samson

Company Dancer



Originally from Wisconsin, Bret Samson began her dance training at Lake Shore Dance with Amy Aichele and Gwen Agee in Saukville, 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*, *The Dying Swan*, and *Sadako*. She has also danced in Opera Omaha productions. This is Bret's fifth season with the company.

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Kelsey Schwenker

Company Dancer



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 BFA 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 performed leading roles in *Alice in Wonderland* and *Poseidon*, as well as featured roles in *The Nutcracker*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Dracula*, *Bacchanale Variations* and *Sadako*. She is rehearsal director for Repertory Ensemble, the company's youth performance group. Kelsey returns for her fifth 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 BFA 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 Odalisques* 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 third season at Ballet Nebraska.

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Sasha York

Company Dancer



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 fifth season with the company.

Apprentices

Rebecca Brenner [New for Season 5]



Ohio native and former member of Rochester City Ballet, Rebecca received her ballet training from Columbus City Ballet School and University of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. She attended summer intensives with American Ballet Theatre in New York City, trained on merit scholarship at Orlando Ballet School in Florida, and participated in Youth American Grand Prix, competing twice in its New York City finals. She has performed Balanchine works including *Walpurgisnacht Ballet*, *Valse-Fantaisie*, *Stars and Stripes*, *Raymonda Variations*, and *Serenade*. At Rochester City Ballet, she appeared in *The Nutcracker*, *Cinderella*, *Serenade* and the premiere of Jamey Leverett's *New York Cityscapes*. This is Rebecca's first season as an apprentice with Ballet Nebraska.

Katherine Eppink [New for Season 5]



Katherine is a graduate of the University of Utah, where she earned a BFA from the department of ballet. Katherine began her classical ballet training in Des Moines at Iowa Dance Theatre. She also danced on scholarship as a member of Utah Ballet, the resident performing company of University of Utah, where she performed lead roles in *Serenade*, *Coppélia*, *Swan Lake*, *Ruslan and Ludmila*, and *The Nutcracker*. Katherine spent summers training with Pacific Northwest Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Joffrey Ballet, Ballet West, Nashville Ballet, Ballet Met, and Korean Ballet Theatre. Katherine joins Ballet Nebraska this season as an apprentice.

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Alyssa Grimsley [New for Season 5]



Alyssa began her dance training at Western Arkansas Ballet in Fort Smith, Arkansas. She trained during summers at Joffrey Midwest, Ballet Austin, Tulsa Ballet, and Cincinnati Ballet. Alyssa graduated *summa cum laude* with a BFA in ballet performance from the University of Oklahoma, where she trained with Mary Margaret Holt, Clara Cravey, Steve Brule, Ilya Kozadayev, and Jeremy Lindberg. Alyssa toured with Oklahoma Festival Ballet at the Haydn's Classical Music Festival in Eisenstadt, Austria and with Burklyn Ballet Theatre to perform at Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland. A member of Regional Dance America, she performed in the southwest region honors piece at the USA International Ballet Competition in Jackson, Mississippi. Alyssa joins Ballet Nebraska this season as an apprentice.

Amaris Sharratt [New for Season 5]



Amaris began her training at Ballet Arts in Tucson, Arizona under the direction of Mary-Beth Cabana. She spent several summers training on full scholarship at Pacific Northwest Ballet, Houston Ballet, and Ballet Tucson. As a Marshall Thurber Scholarship recipient at Burklyn Ballet Theater, Amaris performed in Edinburgh, Scotland, at Fringe Festival, where she performed a featured role in Robert Royce's *Beauty and the Beast*. She also performed with Milwaukee Ballet II, Houston Ballet, Nevada Ballet Theater, Ballet Tucson, Earthen Vessels, and Hopestone Dance Company. Amaris danced featured roles in *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, *Paquita*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Amahl And The Night Visitors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the title role in *Cinderella*, among many other classical and contemporary works. Amaris joins Ballet Nebraska this season as an apprentice.

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. 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*. With Ballet Nebraska, Anna has performed in *Snow White*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Momentum*. Anna returns for her second season as an apprentice with Ballet Nebraska.

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Chloé Watson



Chloé graduated *cum laude* from Purchase College Conservatory of Dance at State University of New York (SUNY) with a BFA in dance performance. She began her classical ballet training at Dallas Ballet Center and graduated with distinguished high honors from Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas, Texas. She studied on scholarship at Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance and performed in George Balanchine's *Serenade* at Jacob's Pillow. While at university, Chloé studied at Paris Opéra Ballet at the invitation of Kazuko Hirabayashi, and traveled to Madrid with members of Compañía Nacional de Danza, where she performed in Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments*. As a Ballet Nebraska trainee, Chloé performed in *Snow White*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Momentum*. She presented her original work *Temporary Dwelling* as part of Ballet Nebraska's *New Works* program. Chloé returns for her second season with Ballet Nebraska.

Trainees

Katherine Boatright [*New for Season 5*]



Mercyhurst College, Erie, PA – BA in Dance Performance
Dance and Performing Arts Academy, Bartlesville, OK
Osage Ballet, Pawhuska, OK
Ballet Concerto, Fort Worth, TX

Whitney Walsh [*New for Season 5*]



Joffrey Ballet, Chicago, IL – Trainee
California Dance Theater, Westlake Village, CA
Pacific Festival Ballet, Agoura Hills, CA

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