

Gainesville Ballet Contact:

Elysabeth Muscat
7528 Old Linton Hall Road
Gainesville, VA 20155
703-753-5005

info@gainesvilleballetcompany.org
www.gainesvilleballetcompany.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 12, 2015

GAINESVILLE BALLET COMPANY ANNOUNCES 2015-16 SEASON

After a very successful 2014-15 season, Gainesville Ballet Company is thrilled to announce its 2015-16 season, featuring an expanded resident company of ten international professional dancers supplemented by ten junior company dancers, led by Artistic Director Rafik Hegab of Cairo, Egypt, and Managing Director Elysabeth Muscat Hegab, of Virginia.

Gainesville Ballet School is the official school of Gainesville Ballet Company.

The 2015-16 season includes *The Nutcracker* in November with special guest stars Isabella Boylston and James Whiteside (current Principal Dancers with American Ballet Theatre); *Carmen*, a world premiere with contemporary choreography in February; *Giselle*, a romantic ballet in two acts in April, and a *Spring Performance* in conjunction with Gainesville Ballet School in June.

The Nutcracker and *Carmen* will be performed at the prestigious Hylton Performing Arts Center, Merchant Hall, in Manassas, VA. *Giselle* will be performed at the Ernst Schlesinger Cultural Center in Annandale, VA. The Hylton Performing Arts Center belongs to George Mason University, and the Ernst Schlesinger Cultural Center is a part of Northern Virginia Community College. A detailed list including dates and locations is provided at the end of the Press Release.

Following the incredibly **enthusiastic response of audiences** for *Carmina Burana*, which premiered on March 20, 2015 at the Hylton Performing Arts Center, Artistic Director Rafik Hegab will create a new, contemporary choreography to the music of the *Carmen Suite*, by Russian composer Rodion Shchedrin. This version is based on Bizet's music for the opera *Carmen*, with different twists. The first *Carmen Suite* ballet was choreographed by Cuban choreographer Alberto Alonso. In April, Gainesville Ballet presents *Giselle*, a romantic ballet in two acts composed by Adolphe Adam and originally choreographed by Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot. This ethereal ballet is a favorite staple of the classical ballet repertoire.



Carmina Burana, photo by Melanie Beus



Artistic Director Rafik Hegab

The Artistic Director, Rafik Hegab, is originally from Egypt. He graduated from the Academy of Arts University with a degree in Ballet Pedagogy and Choreography. He was a Principal Dancer with the Cairo Opera and Ballet and toured to numerous countries with the company in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, as well as India and Mexico. After leaving Egypt, he became the Assistant Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer for Mystic Ballet in Connecticut, and also danced as a Guest Artist for several regional companies including the USA Ballet Company in Illinois, and Baltimore Ballet, where he met Elysbeth Muscat, now his wife and fellow Director. Although he comes from a strong Vaganova background, he also loves contemporary choreography, and created works such as *Carmina Burana*, *Under Control*, *Moulin Rouge*, and *Moonlight*, which were critically acclaimed.

The **2015-16 roster of dancers** includes ten dancers from four different countries: The U.S., Egypt, Japan, and Nicaragua. Principal dancer Shady Mohamed of Egypt will be dancing his third season with Gainesville Ballet. New to the company this season are Ervin Vallecillo of Nicaragua and Otoha Sugiura of Japan, both coming most recently from engagements with Mystic Ballet in Connecticut. Also returning this season are American dancers Stephanie Parkinson, and Mallory Miller, who was promoted from Apprentice to Company Member. Rounding out the company dancers are Elizabeth Wheeler, Kimberly Thompson, Camille Sellers, and two apprentices: Harmony Patton and Emma Button. Elizabeth Wheeler, Ervin Vallecillo, Otoha Sugiura, Kimberly Thompson, and Camille Sellers will also be joining the faculty of the School. The company rehearses at Gainesville Ballet's studios on weekday mornings and select evenings or weekends.



Shady Mohamed, photo by Melanie Beus



Daniil Simkin, photo by Melanie Beus

In addition to the twenty Company and Junior Company dancers, Gainesville Ballet also invites **world class guest artists** as a special bonus. Most recently, Daniil Simkin (superstar and currently a Principal Dancer with American Ballet Theater) and Ashley Boudier (Principal Dancer of New York City Ballet) appeared in the March 2015 performance dancing the Pas de deux from *Le Corsaire*. New York City Ballet Principal Dancers Teresa Reichlen and Ask la Cour were the guest Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier in *The Nutcracker* in November 2014. In 2013, Nour Eldesouki (currently dancing in the Aalto Ballet Theater in Essen and former dancer with Munich and Dresden) and Carolina Boscan of Venezuela (also of the Aalto Ballet Theater and international guest artist), were the guest couple in *The Nutcracker*.

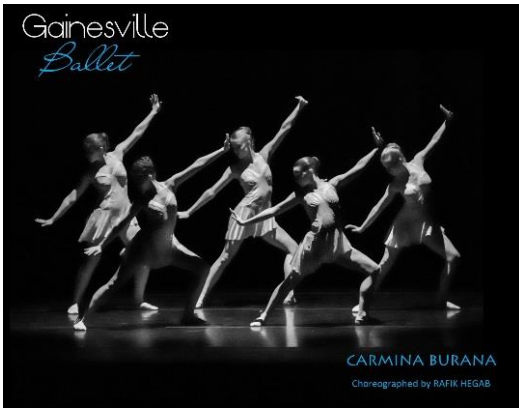


Photo by Melanie Beus

Gainesville Ballet's **Junior Company** will be comprised of approximately ten senior dancers from Gainesville Ballet School. These aspiring pre-professionals have the opportunity to dance corps de ballet and solo roles in Gainesville Ballet performances at the Hylton Performing Arts Center and other theaters, which is a key element in a well- rounded dance education, and provides invaluable preparation for a professional career as a dancer. The Junior Company will be supporting the professional company by dancing in the corps de ballet of *The Nutcracker*, *Carmen*, and *Giselle*. Select students will dance solo roles in *The Nutcracker*.

The students must audition to become Junior Company members. The Junior Company students take eight to ten hours of dance classes per week, plus 3 hours of rehearsals. Since Muscat and Hegab became the Directors in March of 2013, the Junior Company members have danced in *Carmina Burana*, *Swan Lake*, *Act 2*, *Le Corsaire*, *Act 3*, *The Nutcracker*, and in contemporary choreography as part of the **Arts Alive!** Festival, all at the Hylton Performing Arts Center (with the exception of *Swan Lake* in May of 2013, which was held at Battlefield High School.)

Directors Elysabeth Muscat Hegab and Rafik Hegab have been at the helm of Gainesville Ballet since March 2013. Since that time, the organization has gone through a renaissance of tremendous expansion and growth including moving the school into a new, 4,700 square foot facility, expanding the dance curriculum and faculty, adding a Music Program and Special Needs Dance Program, receiving nonprofit status, moving performances into the prestigious Hylton Performing Arts Center, and founding the professional company. Gainesville Ballet also regularly donates either proceeds of tickets sales or gives free tickets to military organizations.



Directors Elysabeth Muscat and Rafik Hegab with students, company members, and guest dancers

Managing Director Elysabeth Muscat is a former international opera singer who has also been on the voice faculty of the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University since 2001, and was the co-founder of Baltimore Ballet, where she led the company in twelve years of growth until she decided to move in a new direction with Rafik Hegab in 2013. Complete biographies of the dancers can be found at <http://gainesvilleballetcompany.org/dancers> , and numerous photos of company dancers are available on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/GainesvilleBalletCompany>

Gainesville Ballet's **Facebook** and other social media pages reach 45 countries: United States of America, United Kingdom, Egypt, Mexico, Bolivia, Brazil, Germany, Guatemala, Greece, Canada, Italy, France, Russia, Australia, Spain, Turkey, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina, Philippines, Switzerland, Peru, Chile, Japan, India, Costa Rica, Netherlands, South Africa, Portugal, Bulgaria, Malaysia, Singapore, Kuwait, Austria, Denmark, China, New Zealand, Ghana, Tunisia, Norway, South Korea, Croatia, Barbados, and Dominican Republic. This international representation covers 38 languages and 45 cities across the globe.

The **dates and locations** of the 2015-16 season in list form are:

The Nutcracker

Dates: Friday, November 27th, 2015, 2pm and 7 pm
Location: Hylton Performing Arts Center, Merchant Hall, Manassas
<http://hyltoncenter.org/>

Carmen

Date: Saturday, February 20, 2016, 7:30 pm
Location: Hylton Performing Arts Center, Merchant Hall, Manassas

Giselle

Date: Saturday, April 16th, 2016, 7:30 pm
Location: Northern Virginia Community College, Ernst Schlesinger Cultural Center, Annandale
<http://www.nvcc.edu/schlesingercenter/index.html>

Company & School Performance

Date: Saturday, June 4th, 2016, 6:30 pm
Location: Hylton Performing Arts Center, Merchant Hall, Manassas

- END -

Media Notes: Flash photography/illuminated videography is permitted at rehearsals when coordinated with Gainesville Ballet, but prohibited during performances. Interviews with Elysabeth Muscat and participating dancers are available on request. Biographical data such as age, grade and schools for the advanced student dancers are provided as an appendix for editorial staff. As a theatrical production, cast assignments are subject to change. Additional photographic images will be released through an online gallery in advance of the performance and following the event. Photos are also available in a variety of compositions upon request.