

Gainesville Ballet
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ABT BALLETS STARS BOYLSTON AND WHITESIDE IN GAINESVILLE BALLET NUTCRACKER

GAINESVILLE, Va. – Gainesville Ballet is excited to announce two performances of *The Nutcracker* on Friday, November 27, 2015 at 2 PM and 7 PM. The full-length ballet features ballet superstars, international guest dancers, the professional dancers of Gainesville Ballet Company, and the students of Gainesville Ballet School. What better way to continue the celebration of the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, than to see a beautiful, professional performance of *The Nutcracker* at the elegant opera house of the 1,123-seat Merchant Hall at the [Hylton Performing Arts Center](http://www.hyltonperformingartscenter.com)!

Audiences who reside in Northern Virginia and beyond will have the rare opportunity to see two of American Ballet Theatre’s most exciting Principal Dancers, Isabella Boylston and James Whiteside.

Isabella Boylston was promoted to Principal Dancer at American Ballet Theatre in 2014. She originally joined ABT as part of the Studio Company in 2005, joined the main company as an apprentice in 2006, and became a member of the corps de ballet in 2007. She was promoted to Soloist in 2011, before recently becoming Principal. Boylston began dancing at the age of three at The Boulder Ballet. At age 12, she joined the Academy of Colorado Ballet in Denver, Colorado, where she commuted two hours on a public bus to study there each day. Her hard work won her the gold medal at the 2001 Youth America Grand Prix Finals in New York City and a year later, she joined the Harid Conservatory in Boca Raton, Florida, which led to her YAGP win and her entrance to ABT. In 2009 Boylston was awarded the Princess Grace Award and subsequently nominated for the 2010 Prix Benois de la Danse and received the Clive Barnes Award that same year. Major roles she has performed with ABT include Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake* at the Metropolitan Opera House, the title roles in *Giselle* and *Firebird*, and Kitri in *Don Quixote*. In addition to dancing with ABT, she has also appeared as a guest artist with the Mariinsky Ballet in St. Petersburg and the Royal Danish Ballet, as well as numerous companies in the US. She is known not only for her incredible technique but also her powerful stage presence and expressiveness. Boylston has received rave reviews from The New York Times, NY Observer, Huffington Post, Wall Street Journal, and more. Boylston will co- star with her frequent *pas de deux* partner, James Whiteside, who has also earned the rank of principal dancer with the world-renowned American Ballet Theatre.



James Whiteside and Isabella Boylston in *Giselle*.
Photo by MIRA.



Isabella Boylston, photo by Nisian Hughes

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Born in Fairfield, Connecticut, James Whiteside began his training at age nine at the D'Valda & Sirico Dance and Music Centre, and continued his training at the Virginia School of the Arts for one year under the direction of Petrus Bosman and David Keener. In 2002, Whiteside joined Boston Ballet II, then joined the corps de ballet of Boston Ballet in 2003 and became a second soloist in 2006. He was promoted to first soloist in 2008 and to principal dancer with Boston Ballet in 2009. Whiteside joined American Ballet Theatre as a Soloist in September 2012 and was named a Principal Dancer in October 2013. His repertoire with the Company includes Solor in *La Bayadère*, the Prince in Frederick Ashton's *Cinderella*, Ali, the Slave in *Le Corsaire*, Basilio and Espada in *Don Quixote*, Oberon in *The Dream*, the third sailor in *Fancy Free*, Albrecht in *Giselle*, Lescaut in *Manon*, the Nutcracker Prince in Alexei Ratmansky's *The Nutcracker*, Iago in *Othello*, Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*, Prince Désiré in *The Sleeping Beauty*, Prince Siegfried and von Rothbart (Ballroom) in *Swan Lake*, and more.

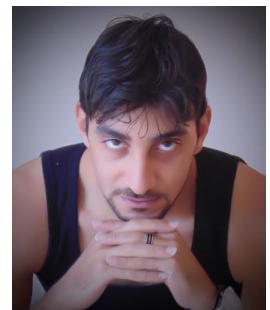


James Whiteside, Photo by MKS Photography

Guest dancer Nurlan Abougaliev will dance the favorite role of Drosselmeyer, Clara's magical Uncle, and the Marzipan Soloist. Abougaliev was a Principal Dancer with Moscow City Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, and Soloist with the Russian National Ballet, Colorado Ballet, and Ballet Internationale. He has danced Principal Roles in all the major ballets and has toured extensively around the world. Ahmaud Culver of Egypt will be appearing as the Mouse King and the Chinese Soloist.

Gainesville Ballet company members will be dancing leading roles alongside the guest stars. Ervin Vallecillo of Nicaragua will be debuting with Gainesville Ballet this season. He danced for four years with the Mystic Ballet in Connecticut before joining Gainesville. He will dance the Arab Doll and Trepak, showcasing some surprising break dance moves in the choreography! Also debuting with the company are Elizabeth Wheeler and Camille Sellers, originally from Tallahassee Florida, who will be dancing the Snow Queens and Spanish Soloists, and Kimberly Thompson of Poolesville, Maryland, who will dance the Arabian Soloist, exhibiting her impressive flexibility. Returning company members Stephanie Parkinson of Front Royal, VA, and Mallory Miller of Boonville, New York, will dance Soloists in the Waltz of the Flowers. Gainesville Ballet also welcomes two apprentices this season, Emma Button of Lilburn, Georgia, and Harmony Patton of Centreville, Virginia. Gainesville Ballet's Junior Company will also be performing select solo roles and corps de ballet dances.

The music for the production is the original score by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Tchaikovsky composed *The Nutcracker* in December of 1891. A year later, the première was held at the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg, Russia. The upcoming Gainesville Ballet production will feature a mix of traditional Russian choreography and new choreography and staging by Artistic Director Rafik Hegab, based upon the E.T.A. Hoffman story, with beautiful costumes and scenery. Originally from Egypt, Hegab joined the Cairo Opera Ballet Company in 1999, won first place in the Egyptian National Ballet Competition in 2000, rose the ranks to Soloist and Principal Dancer, and embarked on international tours with the company in China, Lebanon, the Czech Republic, Jordan, Turkey, Germany, Italy, Austria, Spain, India, Greece, and Russia. Hegab recently thrilled audiences with the world premiere of *Carmina Burana* in March 2015, and will be choreographing *Carmen* in February.



Artistic Director Rafik Hegab.
Photo by Gainesville Ballet.

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Gainesville Ballet has been under the leadership of Artistic Director [Rafik Hegab](#), and Managing Director, [Elysabeth Muscat Hegab](#) since March of 2013. Gainesville Ballet's professional company has grown each year and now has a roster of eight resident, full time dancers, supplemented by guest artists and world stars. Famous dancers who have graced the stages of past Gainesville Ballet performances include ABT Principal Daniil Simkin, NYC Ballet Principals Ashley Bouder, Teresa Reichlen, Ask la Cour, and Principal Dancers from Germany's Alto Ballet, Nour Eldesouki and Carolina Boscan. Besides the annual *Nutcrackers*, Gainesville Ballet presented the Premiere of Rafik Hegab's *Carmina Burana*, Acts from *Swan Lake* and *Le Corsaire*; this season will feature the premiere of *Carmen*, and the full length romantic ballet, *Giselle*, starring Aaron Smyth and Aria Alekzander. What makes Gainesville Ballet unique in this area is the combination of an excellent pre-professional school, a resident professional company with international talent, and featured guest artists and world stars appearing on stage together, at the prestigious Hylton Center and other theaters in Northern Virginia. The most advanced students have the opportunity to dance leading or solo roles in professional productions with world class dancers. This high level of professionalism and multiple performance opportunities is an invaluable asset for any student's dance education. While the company was only founded in 2013, it is quickly garnering respect for the excellent artistic quality of the choreography, choice of repertoire, and dancers. The company is currently supported by The Dominion Foundation, NOVEC, and Prince William County.



NYC Ballet Principals Teresa Reichlen & Ask la Cour in Gainesville Ballet's 2014 Nutcracker.
Photo by Alexandru Glusacov

The role of Clara will be danced by student Elle Park, a twelve year old seventh grader from Ronald Wilson Reagan Middle School. Other solo roles will be performed by Junior Company dancers Emma Dryden, Chloe Banachoski, Reghan Irving, Rebecca Morneau, Sara Massei, Madeline Penn, Isabella Reilly, and Gabrielle Jeong.

Ballet patrons will enjoy an elegant experience at the award-winning Hylton Center. Ranked #13 in the country for University Theatres, the Hylton not only has a European style opera house interior with balconies, twinkling lights and an elegant lobby, it also continues to improve on its state of the art facilities and technical capabilities, which add to the beauty and professionalism of performances produced there. The large stage handles multiple backdrops, quick scene changes, and has a fantastic array of professional lighting effects. The Hylton Center is located at 10960 George Mason Circle in Manassas, Virginia, and is the go-to theater in Prince William County. Tickets for the holiday performance of Gainesville Ballet are \$35 for adults, and \$15 for children under age 12. Guests have the option to purchase from the box office at the Hylton Performing Arts Center, online under *Gainesville Ballet* at www.tickets.com or by calling (888) 945-2468. You can also visit <http://www.hyltoncenter.org/calendar/708/>.

Gainesville Ballet is also sponsoring a *Tea With Clara* at Dominion Valley Country Club, on Sunday, December 6th at 4 pm. Guests can enjoy a delicious high tea lunch along with a performance of excerpts from *The Nutcracker*. Tickets for this popular event can be purchased by contacting Gainesville Ballet at (703) 753-5005.

To learn more about Gainesville Ballet, visit www.gainesvilleballetcompany.org.

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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.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA FOR ADVANCED STUDENT DANCERS

The biographical data for the advanced student dancers in *The Nutcracker* is provided for editorial reference.

Level 5:

Emma Dryden, age 17, a twelfth grader from [Battlefield High School](#)

Chloe Banachoski, age 16, a tenth grader from [Brentsville District High School](#)

Reghan Irving, age 15, a tenth grader from [Patriot High School](#)

Rebecca Morneau, age 16, a twelfth grader who is homeschooled in Fauquier County

Madeline Penn, age 16, an eleventh grader from [Patriot High School](#)

Sara Massei, age 15, a tenth grader from [Kettle Run High School](#)

Isabella Reilly, age 15, a tenth grader from [Battlefield High School](#)

Gabrielle Jeong, age 13, an eighth grader from [Gainesville Middle School for the Arts and Sciences](#)

Elle Park, age 12, a seventh grader from [Ronald Wilson Reagan Middle School](#)

Level 4:

Sophia Browning, age 13, a seventh grader from [Gainesville Middle School for the Arts and Sciences](#)

Jade Condrell, age 11, a sixth grader from [Highland School](#)

Catelyn Fitzpatrick, age 15, a ninth grader from [Battlefield High School](#)

Camila Griggs, age 11, a sixth grader from [Bull Run Middle School](#)

Abigail Judkins, age 13, an eighth grader from CHES (Christian Hybrid Education Support School)

Laura Rosendale, age 12, a 7th grader from [Gainesville Middle School for the Arts and Sciences](#)

Gabrielle Smith, age 13, a 8th grader from [Marshall Middle School](#)