

PRESS RELEASE:

Gainesville Ballet – Major Announcements for 2016-17

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Gainesville Ballet has several exciting major announcements for 2016-17:

**Name change, International Touring, Announcement of 2016-17 Performance Season,
Collaboration with Live Orchestra, Expanded Professional Company,
Fundraising Gala, Gainesville Ballet School Student Accomplishments**

Name change:

Gainesville Ballet Company and School has been under the leadership of Elysabeth Muscat Hegab and Rafik Hegab since March of 2013. The nonprofit professional company, Gainesville Ballet Company, debuted in 2014 with *Carmina Burana*. The professional company is changing its name to “**Virginia National Ballet.**” Gainesville Ballet School will keep its name for the time being. Why the name change? People frequently confuse Gainesville Ballet with two other Gainesville Ballets, one in Georgia and one in Florida. Additionally, while the company is proudly located in Gainesville, Virginia, the reach of the company is much further than the immediate geographical area, and the Artistic Director and Company Dancers are an international group, coming from the Middle East, Central America, South America, and the Far East, in addition to the American Managing Director and American dancers. The new name will eliminate any possible false association with the other Gainesville Ballets, and reflect the larger scope of the company. New websites and email addresses will be made available during the season. For the time being, the same website will be used:

<http://gainesvilleballetcompany.org> .

International Touring:

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Virginia National Ballet (formerly Gainesville Ballet) performs regularly at the Hylton Performing Arts Center in Manassas, and has performed at the Ernst Cultural Center in Fairfax County. This past summer, one of our company dancers presented solos choreographed by Artistic Director Rafik Hegab at the 2016 International Ballet Festival in Nicaragua, and the company will tour there in June 2017 to participate in the Festival and represent the state of Virginia internationally. Performing internationally is a huge step forward for the company, which plans on further tours and collaborations. We not only have international dancers in the company, but we are now also performing internationally. Additionally, Virginia National Ballet has been selected as a performer on the Virginia Commission for the Arts 2017-18 Tour Directory for the State of Virginia.



Virginia State Ballet's COLLECTION

Announcing the 2016-17 Season:

Virginia State Ballet (formerly Gainesville Ballet) proudly announces its 3rd season including collaboration with Live Orchestra:

Virginia National Ballet's visionary Artistic Director, Rafik Hegab of Egypt, has made a huge impact on the cultural scene in Northern Virginia by choosing exciting, unusual repertoire and choreographing world premieres each season (*Carmina Burana* in 2014, *Carmen*, and *Collection* in 2015). He continues this trend in 2016-17, and welcomes a new collaboration with the Old Bridge Chamber Orchestra.



Virginia National Ballet's CARMEN

The Nutcracker. We begin with two performances of this holiday favorite at the Hylton Performing Arts Center on Friday, November 25th, 2pm and 7 pm. See a cast of award winning international dancers along with students of the school in this gorgeous production that will appeal to ballet aficionados as well as families. Principal Dancers have performed with major companies in the US, Japan, Romania, and Brazil, and were semi-finalists in the Varna Ballet Competition, the most competitive international ballet competition in the world, and finalists in many other international competitions. These performances are the first Nutcrackers of the season, and very popular in the region, with packed houses each season.

La Bohème & Bohemian Rhapsody. The must-see event of the season! Virginia National Ballet's talented and unique Artistic Director, Rafik Hegab, choreographs two Premieres on the theme of Bohemia. The first part is *La Bohème*, a neoclassical ballet to the timelessly beautiful La Bohème Suite (based on the beloved opera by Puccini), accompanied live by the Old Bridge Chamber Orchestra under the baton of 2016 Seefeldt Award Winner Maestro David Kirven. This is followed by *Bohemian Rhapsody*, the ultimate **Hard Rock Ballet** to the music of Queen. You will be rocked! Two performances at the Hylton Performing Arts Center on Saturday, February 10th, 2pm and 7 pm. This marks the first collaboration with a live orchestra for Virginia State Ballet. Additionally, Managing Director Elysabeth Muscat Hegab, a professional opera singer who recently sang in Rafik Hegab's premiere of CARMEN, will be appearing as an operatic soloist with the Old Bridge Chamber Orchestra in March, for one of their seasonal performances.



Virginia National Ballet's GISELLE

Snow White. You will be delighted by this enchanting ballet about the famous fairy tale character, Snow White. This family friendly production will be especially appealing to children of all ages, with adorable sets, costumes, beautiful music, outstanding choreography, and stellar dancers. Young dancers from the region will be invited to audition for a limited number of roles for children in this ballet. One performance only at the Hylton Performing Arts Center on Friday, May 5th, 7 pm.



Virginia National Ballet's NUTCRACKER

Ballet Fundraising Gala and Silent Auction: Snow White Ball! This promises to be a glamorous evening at the Hylton Performing Arts Center, Gregory Family Theatre, where patrons will enjoy cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, and dancing, as well as performances by Virginia State Ballet's professional dancers, and a Silent Auction with many fantastic items donated by local businesses at low prices to support the nonprofit company. Saturday, April 22nd, 6:30 pm.

Spring Performance and School Recital. Saturday, June 3rd is the date for Gainesville Ballet School's Spring Recital with a short performance by Virginia National Ballet Company Dancers as well. Students will perform

a wide variety of dance and musical numbers including ballet, modern, jazz, tap, hip hop, piano, and vocal selections.

Other events in the season include the ever popular *Tea with Clara*, which will once again be held at the Dominion Valley Country Club on Sunday, December 4th, as well as various outreach presentations at local schools and retirement communities.

Expanded Professional Company of 10 Dancers:

Virginia National Ballet (formerly Gainesville Ballet) announces a resident company of ten professional dancers coming from the USA, Japan, Brazil, and Russia. The professional company will be supported by a select Junior Company from Gainesville Ballet School. The professional dancers have impressive credentials including Semifinalist in the prestigious Varna International Ballet Competition and many other awards in international competitions, and performances with major companies in the US, Brazil, Taiwan, and Romania. Full biographies of the 2016-17 company dancers can be found on our website.

Student accomplishments:

Managing Director Elysabeth Muscat Hegab's voice student, 10-year-old Jake Miller, made headlines this past fall when he starred in the title role of *Oliver* at Arena Stage, the Mead Center for American Theater in Washington, DC. This summer he is singing in the *New York Spectacular* starring the Radio City Rockettes at Radio City Music Hall. He has also been cast in a leading role in the world premiere new musical *Freaky Friday*, to be performed at the Arlington Signature Theatre. The premiere staging in DC will be helmed by two-time Tony nominee Christopher Ashley with choreography by Sergio Trujillo (*On Your Feet!*). Ms. Muscat Hegab has many voice and piano students of all ages and levels. Other students won top awards at the National Association of Teachers of Singing competitions and were accepted to many of the most exclusive conservatories in the country.



Gainesville Ballet's CARMINA BURANA

Gainesville Ballet School students were accepted to summer intensives at American Ballet Theatre, Richmond Ballet, Kirov Academy, South Carolina Dance Conservatory, and more. Graduate Rebecca Morneau has been offered a position as an Apprentice with Virginia State Ballet. Students who graduate from the school have a wonderful opportunity to dance professionally with the Company if they are ready.

Gainesville Ballet School's Artistic Director, Rafik Hegab, holds a Bachelor's Degree in Dance Pedagogy (Vaganova Syllabus) and Choreography. Ballet students are taught strictly in the Vaganova style, the foremost training system of classical ballet, which has produced such famous dancers as Baryshnikov,

Nureyev, Vishneva, Zakharova, and more. Additional dance forms round out students' education including contemporary, jazz, tap, hip hop, character, and lyrical. Students of the school participate in The Nutcracker and the annual Spring Recital. Junior Company dancers often perform with the professional company in their performances, as well as other community events including Arts Alive, Tea with Clara, and outreach presentations.

The Gainesville Ballet Facebook Page currently has over 3,600 Likes and spans dozens of countries. To see photos and videos there please visit <https://www.facebook.com/GainesvilleBalletCompany/>
The website for the school and company is: <http://gainesvilleballetcompany.org>

Tickets for all mainstage performances are available through www.tickets.com or at the Hylton Box Office. Tickets for the Ballet Fundraising Gala and Tea with Clara are available through Virginia State Ballet at 703-753-5005 or emailing info@gainesvilleballetcompany.org



Virginia National Ballet's CARMEN