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Ballet A Universal Art for Latina Ballerinas of Ballet Nebraska

OMAHA – Ballet Nebraska in Omaha is the state’s professional dance company with many dancers from around the state and nation coming to Omaha to perfect their skills.

Ballet is an art form that once had limited accessibility, but that has slowly changed over the years. In Omaha, there are several Latinas in Ballet Nebraska who are rising stars.

The Little Ballerina

Among the youngest ballerinas is 9-year-old Lucia Revollo, a fourth grade elementary school student. She has just performed her first public performance of the Ballet’s production of *Alice in Wonderland* where she played a flower. Lucia has been taking dancing classes in ballet, Jazz and tap with Ballet Nebraska for the past seven years.

“(Ballet) is fun,” said Lucia. “It keeps me busy and I feel like I can do it.”

Lucia’s mother, Kate Revollo, wanted to share her own experiences with dance as a child with her daughter.

“She’s always liked dancing and music and she’s dancing at the same studio I danced in,” she said.

Lucia believes ballet is important because it helps with stress.

“Ballet is so graceful and makes you feel relaxed,” she said.

Lucia’s father immigrated to Omaha from Bolivia, and her family keeps her heritage close by keeping in touch with family in Bolivia and enrolling her in the Dual Language Program at Castellar Elementary School in Omaha.

“It’s important to learn about different cultures and languages,” said Kate. “I think it’s great to have a broader perspective in your future.”

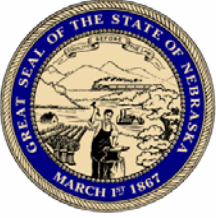
Lucia said she is thinking about becoming a dance teacher when she grows up.

“I want to teach kids how to dance so maybe the whole world knows how to dance.”

The Rising Star

There are many teenage dancers with Ballet Nebraska, but 14-year-old Susana Pettis also takes folklorico classes along with ballet, ballroom, and fundamental choreography classes.

Susana, a high school freshman, started dancing with Ballet Nebraska when she was 9-years-old and is working to become a professional dancer.



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"I love dancing," said Susana. "It's what I do, and I feel like it's what I'm meant to do. Dance is important because it shows a story and is intelligent. Dance is a global thing."

Susana's mother, Marta Sonia, originally from Medellin, Colombia, met her father, Glenn Pettis, at the University of Nebraska in Omaha in 1998.

"When she was a baby, she was always dancing," said Glenn. "I think respect for other cultures is very important. My daughter dances with people from other cultures and that interaction is important for her development. I'm lucky to have a Colombian wife because the riches of Latin culture are here with her and me on a daily basis."

Susana is enrolled in the Dual Language Program in Omaha Public Schools. Outside of Ballet Nebraska she takes dancing classes to learn traditional Mexican and Colombian dance.

"I love being of a different culture," said Susana. "I think it's a gift if you're different; it's your life and who you are, and even if you don't want to you should attempt to find out who you are."

The Prima Ballerina

Among the stars of Ballet Nebraska is 25-year-old Erin Alarcón, a Mercyhurst graduate in Dance from New Jersey, she joined the dance company in 2010.

Erin has danced in the productions of *Swing, Swing, Swing*, *The Nutcracker*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Momentum*, *Dracula* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to name a few. She has been dancing since she was 5-years-old after having seen *Peter Pan* and telling her parents that she wanted to fly. Her mother, Lisa Alarcón, signed her up for ballet. Since then she has danced contemporary, Jazz, tap, hip hop, modern and flamenco.

"I think dance is exciting," said Erin. "I get to be different characters and do different styles that are playful, sad, truthful, and lots of different emotions. Performing is when I feel most alive and there's no greater joy than being onstage and giving my joy to the audience."

Erin's father, Robert Alarcón, is a soccer athlete from Quito, Ecuador. He was invited to the United States to play soccer in America and was a member of the U.S. Olympic Men's Soccer team in 1984. Erin remains close to her family in Ecuador. She considers her heritage the center of herself, like building blocks.

"Culture is what ties you to your family, it who you are, in your blood. You should know more about your culture because it's who you are," she said.

And that is where ballet comes in. As a professional dancer, she knows how ballet is taught from beginner to expert level, and she says ballet is taught the same way around the world.

"It's a universal culture," she said.

The New Dancer



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More dancers join Ballet Nebraska every year including more Latinas such as Chloe Watson who recently joined the company as a trainee from Texas. She has danced ballet across Texas, the country and has even trained in Europe.

“I am half-Colombian. My mother and her parents are Colombian, so I grew up eating a lot of South American food and around a lot of Spanish. My family and I are very close, and they have been supportive of my field since childhood. My mom is a personal chef and often combines South American flavor and spice with traditional American comfort foods,” said Watson.

Erin, Susana, Chloe and Lucia, along with the many Latina dancers with Ballet Nebraska, will be performing all year. Their next performance is of *Poseidon* on May 2nd and May 4th; contact 402-541-6946 for more information.

If you are interesting in enrolling your child with Ballet Nebraska, email info@balletnebraska.org.

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Note: Photos Available.