

# AMERICAN MIDWEST *Ballet*

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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From left: Dancers Erika Overturff and Sasha York celebrate in 2010 after American Midwest Ballet [then called Ballet Nebraska] makes its successful Orpheum Theater debut with *Swing, Swing, Swing!* Center and right: Fashions and dance styles of the 1940s help tell the ballet's story, through a series of vignettes that trace the flowering of a wartime romance. [More full-resolution photos...](#)

## **"COMING FULL CIRCLE": AMB CELEBRATES TEN SEASONS WITH THE BALLET THAT STARTED IT ALL**

OMAHA — It was just after 10 pm on Saturday, October 2, 2010. Erika Overturff, breathless from two hours onstage, was still in costume as she ran outside to pose for commemorative photos under the Orpheum Theater marquee. The new ballet company she had founded had just completed its first mainstage production: Harrison McEldowney's *Swing, Swing, Swing!*

Fast-forward to April 2020. Now wrapping up its tenth season, the company – still with Overturff as its artistic director and an active performer – is now American Midwest Ballet. Its original 12-member roster has grown to 29 professional dancers from 17 states and two foreign countries, and it is now based in spacious new studios in Council Bluffs' just-completed Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center.

"It's time to celebrate," Overturff said, "and a great time to bring back *Swing, Swing, Swing!*"

The ballet is a tribute to the Second World War's "Greatest Generation," with a central love story framed by dance vignettes that draw on the era's popular styles, Overturff said.

"It's terrifically entertaining because it's so varied," she said. "Harrison McEldowney has an amazing creative range – he choreographs for everything from classical ballet companies to cruise ships, and the Olympics to Carnegie Hall. In *Swing, Swing, Swing!* he incorporates jiving G.I.s, tap dancers, Lindy hoppers, and Rosie the Riveters *en pointe*. There's a beautiful movie-musical-style romantic duet that rolls right into a full-on bar fight. The dancers love performing this ballet because they get to use so much of their movement vocabulary."

Another memorable feature of the ballet, Overturff said, is the jazz combo that performs Big Band music live onstage with the dancers. For 2020, she said, bandleader Doyle Tipler has brought back six members of the original DoyleMusic Combo who performed in the original production.

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"I was thrilled when I heard that Doyle was getting the band back together," Overturff said. "The energy that they bring to the stage is incredible, and the dancers amplify that energy. Suddenly you feel like you're really in a '40s nightclub, throwing away your cares and dancing to a swinging band."

As American Midwest Ballet completes its first decade, Overturff said, it is doubly satisfying to return to the ballet that started it all – performing it in both the company's newest venue, the Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center, and at the Orpheum, where it all began.

"We've been working hard for ten years," she said. "It's special coming back to *Swing, Swing, Swing!* because we can stop and see just how far we've come.

"And we can also recapture the excitement of that first season — of putting on a show and having an audience and being a company. It's a way of coming full circle."

Performances of *Swing, Swing, Swing!* will be at 7:30 pm Saturday, April 4, at the Hoff Family Arts & Culture, 1001 South 6th Street, Council Bluffs; and 7:30 pm Saturday, April 11, at Omaha's Orpheum Theater.

Tickets for the Hoff Family Arts and Culture Center are available at [paceartsiowa.org](http://paceartsiowa.org) or by calling (712) 890-5600. Tickets for the Orpheum Theater are available at [ticketomaha.com](http://ticketomaha.com) or by calling (402) 345-0606.

For ticket links and more information, visit [amballet.org](http://amballet.org).

*American Midwest Ballet [AMB] brings the beauty, athleticism, and energy of professional ballet to audiences in the Midwest and beyond. Performing at home and on tour, its mission is to provide enrichment through programs of the highest quality: professional dance performances, educational programs, and community outreach.*

*AMB's tenth anniversary season is presented with the generous support of premier benefactors the Iowa West Foundation, the Fred and Eve Simon Charitable Foundation, the Holland Foundation, and Douglas County; season sponsors Omaha Steaks and the Peter Kiewit Foundation; and major support from the Heider Family Foundation, the Nebraska Arts Council, the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, and the Sherwood Foundation.*

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**SYNOPSIS: SWING, SWING, SWING!**

*Choreography.....Harrison McEldowney*  
*American Midwest Ballet [Ballet Nebraska] Premiere .....Orpheum Theater, October 2, 2010*

It’s World War II, and a patriotic fervor unites the nation as Americans support both each other and their collective cause. Our scene is set with soldiers embarking on their daily routine – energized by spirit and determination.

At the same time, a bevy of hostesses prepares for the task ahead of them: providing entertainment to the servicemen on leave at New York’s Stage Door Canteen. The soldiers seek a happy refuge from the rigors of war at this famous establishment. Big Band music, swing dancing and a host of performers offer much-needed recreation to these American heroes. One lucky man even finds love at the canteen and a girl to call his own.

The soldiers are shipped off to defend the nation. With the men away at war, the women assume the duties left behind – joining the workforce and coining the phrase “Rosie the Riveter.” Overseas, the soldiers reflect on the nature of GI life and dream of Vargas calendar girls. Back in New York, a hostess from the Stage Door Canteen longs for the return of her new love, while he simply dreams of home.

A nation rejoices as the war ends and the soldiers return home. The young lovers reunite and dream of being a “Me & Mrs. You.” In celebration, the Stage Door Canteen once again comes alive to the sounds of *Swing, Swing, Swing!*

**ONSTAGE MUSICIANS FOR *SWING, SWING, SWING!*: THE DOYLEMUSIC COMBO**

Performing onstage with the dancers in *Swing, Swing, Swing!*, the DoyleMusic Combo is a collection of some of the finest jazz musicians in the Omaha area. Its members have played with local groups including Luigi Inc., The Confidentials, Rave On, the Omaha Big Band, the Steve Raybine Band, and many more, as well as in the original 2010 production of *Swing, Swing, Swing!*

Band members are:

- Doyle Tipler .....leader, trumpet
- Ken Janak.....saxophone, clarinet
- Camille Metoyer Moten .....vocals
- Jeff Scheffler .....guitar
- Mark Haar.....bass
- Carlos Figueroa .....drums



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### HARRISON McELDOWNEY, CHOREOGRAPHER

American choreographer Harrison McEldowney is renowned for his comic and witty creative style. His original work *Swing, Swing, Swing!* marked the debut performance of American Midwest Ballet (formerly Ballet Nebraska) in October 2010.

He has worked with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, River North Dance Chicago, Civic Ballet of Chicago, Ballet Met, Ballet Arkansas, The Big Muddy Dance Company, Louisville Ballet and Chicago Shakespeare Repertory, among many others.

He is known for his theatrical work, for the Summer Olympics Closing Ceremonies (Barcelona), and for Carnegie Hall's *Give My Regards to Broadway: A Salute to 125 Years of Musical Theater*. He choreographed the 35th Anniversary Tour of *American Bandstand* and choreographed and directed the Australian tour of *More Dirty Dancing*.

McEldowney contributed choreography to the films *Road to Perdition*, *Children on Their Birthdays*, and the independent film *Vanilla City*. He also worked with Sammy Davis Jr., Van Johnson, Chita Rivera, Dorothy Lamour, Carol Channing, Debbie Reynolds, and rap artists Salt 'n Pepa.

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