

AMERICAN
MIDWEST
Ballet

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American Midwest Ballet's February performance of Frank Chaves' Habaneras, the Music of Cuba will likely be the company's last live theater appearance until 2021, organizers say, but plans are in the works to keep bringing ballet to the community. [Download an HQ photo...](#)

**AMERICAN MIDWEST BALLET CANCELS PRODUCTIONS THROUGH 2020;
ONLINE INITIATIVES WILL PAVE WAY FOR PLANNED 2021 RETURN TO STAGE**

OMAHA — Responding to ongoing public health concerns, American Midwest Ballet [AMB] has canceled live stage productions for the remainder of 2020, artistic director Erika Overturff said today.

The company is planning a series of online programming initiatives to continue bringing dance to the community, as it works toward a return to live theater performances in 2021, she said.

"We had a fantastic Season 11 planned, but COVID-19 has put us in a very difficult position," Overturff said. "Rehearsing a ballet production involves many hours of intense physical effort at very close quarters, and performing before a large, enthusiastic crowd magnifies the risk. Canceling live performances was a painful decision, but we felt we had to put the safety of our dancers and our audience first."

The ballet has established the AMB Relief Fund, and is seeking donations to help offset some half a million dollars in ticket revenue lost to the cancellations, development director Sarah Maloney said. Holders of tickets to the canceled performances also are being asked to consider donating the value of their tickets to the relief fund, she said.

The cancellations mean the ballet will not be able to stage its planned season-opening production of Harrison McEldowney's *Swing, Swing, Swing!*, or *The Nutcracker*, the family-favorite holiday ballet that traditionally draws the season's largest crowds, Overturff said.

But she said the ballet will continue to monitor the guidance of public health authorities in hopes of being able to resume live performances in 2021. "We've got our fingers and toes crossed that we'll be able to be back onstage soon, and we are working hard to be ready for when that time comes," she said.

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In the meantime, Overturff said, AMB is ramping up a series of initiatives to deliver programming online to a variety of audiences. The company's studios have been outfitted with tablets and large-screen monitors so instructors can conduct interactive virtual classes, she said; its AMB School is already teaching its classes this way, and American Midwest Ballet's professional dancers will begin holding their daily company class virtually as soon as their season work schedule begins.

For the community, Overturff said, AMB is putting the finishing touches on plans to create and deliver a wide range of educational and artistic online content.

"Dance has the power to inspire and connect us – which is needed now more than ever – and all of these offerings will be shared free of charge with our community," she said.

As examples, she noted that the ballet's YouTube channel already hosts a series of free dance-at-home classes for all ages, and its "Virtual Day of Dance" on July 25 provided participants with an afternoon of 23 free dance classes and activities.

The company's professional dancers will be active in creating online content, Overturff said, as well as in a new mentorship series with the AMB Junior Company. The mentor series will pair each of the junior company's high-school-age dancers with a mentor from the professional company, who will provide individualized training suggestions, artistic coaching, and career advice, she said.

Still under wraps, but coming soon, is an innovative program that will give the company's dancers a chance to create works based on virtual collaborations, she said.

"It's challenging right now, but we're looking forward to returning to the studio and the stage as soon as it's safe to do so," Overturff said. "Until then, we're going to continue finding innovative ways to safely share the magic of dance with our community."

For more information about American Midwest Ballet's programs, activities, and the AMB Relief Fund, visit amballet.org.

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American Midwest Ballet is the region's resident professional dance company, bringing work beyond words to audiences in Nebraska, Iowa, and beyond. Performing at home and on tour, its mission is to provide cultural enrichment through dance programs of the highest quality: breathtaking performances, engaging education, and uplifting community outreach.

AMB's programming is presented with the generous support of premier benefactors the Iowa West Foundation, the Fred and Eve Simon Charitable Foundation, and the Holland Foundation; season sponsors Omaha Steaks and Douglas County; major support from the Heider Family Foundation, the Nebraska Arts Council, the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, the Peter Kiewit Foundation, the Sherwood Foundation, and Herb and Carole Dewey; as well as additional support from individual sponsors and donors.

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