

AMERICAN
MIDWEST
Ballet

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American Midwest Ballet professional dancer Alexandra Hoffman leads a class as AMB's 2021 Summer Intensive gets underway. Fifty-two students from eight states are enrolled in the three-week summer dance program.

DANCE STUDIOS COME TO LIFE AS SUMMER INTENSIVE BEGINS

COUNCIL BLUFFS — American Midwest Ballet's studios, quiet during the pandemic, are alive again this week with the clatter of *pointe* shoes and the sounds of dance music.

The ballet company's annual summer intensive – a three-week program for serious dance students ages 10 and up – began Monday, bringing 52 young dancers from eight states to AMB's home at the Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center in Council Bluffs. They spend five days per week, plus Saturday mornings, immersed in classes that include ballet, contemporary, jazz and musical theater dance, plus repertory and conditioning.

"It's great to see dancers in these studios again," said AMB ballet master Matthew Lovegood, who directs the summer intensive program. "People were eager to come – there was so much demand that we had to close enrollment in early May. Some of our students have been waiting for this intensive since last summer, when we had to postpone because of the pandemic. There's a tremendous feeling of energy and enthusiasm."

STUDENTS IMMERSE THEMSELVES IN THE INTENSIVE EXPERIENCE

Living away from home and meeting dancers from other places are big parts of the appeal of a summer intensive, Lovegood said. This year, that appeal has drawn dancers from Kansas, Missouri, South Dakota, Minnesota, Utah, and Virginia, along with Nebraska and Iowa, he said. The program offers a special “junior intensive” for dancers ages 10-12, plus the regular intensive program for dancers age 13 and up.



Out-of-town dancers housed at UNO's Scott Campus get a daily catered lunch served in the Hoff Center's event space, McCormick 1894.

The intensive offers housing for out-of-town students on the Scott Campus of UNO, Lovegood said, where they live with four “resident advisors” – including AMB professional dancers Katerina Schweitzer and Nora Carr – who supervise and help plan recreational activities for them.

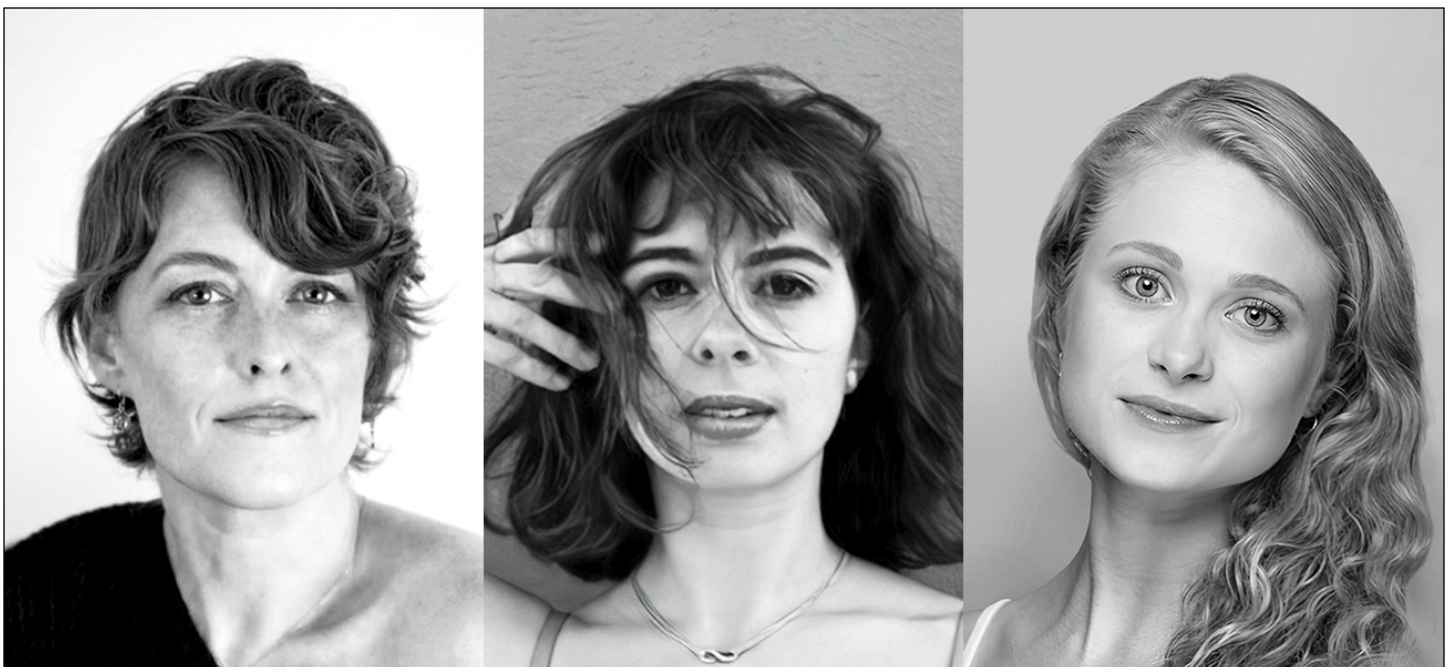
Health protection played a key role in planning the intensive, Lovegood said. Masks are required for everyone, to protect students too young to be eligible for vaccines. The number of students per studio is set using a formula devised by the American Guild of Musical Artists [AGMA] specifically for the performing arts. To meet space requirements, the intensive is using not only AMB’s three dance studios, but others set up in the Hoff Center’s stage, art gallery, music rehearsal hall, and boardroom.

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AMB dancer Kelanie Murphy gives advice during a class in the music rehearsal hall.

GUEST INSTRUCTORS BRING A NEW CHALLENGE EACH WEEK



Guest faculty members (from left): Dylis Croman; Jordan Miller; Anna Grunewald

Each week of the intensive brings a new guest faculty member. This week, Broadway star **Dylis Croman** – recently seen as Roxy Hart in *Chicago* – is teaching musical theater dance in the style of groundbreaking choreographer Bob Fosse. In the second week, **Jordan Miller**, co-artistic director of Brooklyn-based contemporary ballet company *konverjdans*, will teach contemporary dance. For the third week, Miami City Ballet dancer **Anna Grunewald** will teach ballet and *pointe*. The rotating roster “keeps things fresh and gives the students more chances to explore,” Lovegood said.

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Dylis Croman leads dancers in a theater-dance warmup in the Hoff Center's fourth-floor art gallery. The intensive is using the gallery, music rehearsal hall, boardroom, and stage, as well as AMB's dance studios, to provide safe spacing for the program's 52 participants.

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PERFORMANCE CLOSES AN INTENSIVE THREE WEEKS



Dancers learn a contemporary ballet for the July 9 performance.

The summer intensive will wrap up on July 9 with a performance in the Hoff Center's Polina and Bob Schlott Performing Arts Center theater, where dancers will have a chance to show the classical ballet excerpts and contemporary works they learn throughout the intensive.

"The performance caps off three weeks that many dancers will never forget," Lovegood said. "Dancers often have told me that their summer intensive was one of the best times of their lives."

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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, inspiring education, and uplifting community engagement.

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