

AMERICAN MIDWEST *Ballet*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 8, 2021

Contact: Wesley Houston, Marketing Manager - wesley@amballet.org

(712) 890-5590

Download print-quality photos [here](#).

View Season 12 company bios [here](#).



American Midwest Ballet dancers are excited to be back together and working on Season 12. [More photos...](#)

IT'S "HOMECOMING WEEK" AS AMERICAN MIDWEST BALLET KICKS OFF SEASON 12

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Ia. – Exactly 570 days after the pandemic put its normal operations on hold, American Midwest Ballet [AMB] sprang back into action this week as it launched its twelfth season of professional dance.

“This is our homecoming week,” said Erika Overturff, the company’s founder and artistic director. “It is absolutely amazing to be back at rehearsals with the company dancers. They look fantastic! While the pandemic pause felt everlasting at times, being back together makes it feel like we didn’t skip a beat.

“We are a family, and there is a real sense of joy to everyone’s dancing. Starting back with *Nutcracker* feels completely natural, as it is the ballet we’ve performed together the most. I’ve been so impressed with the dancers in rehearsals and I’m incredibly proud of their dedication and perseverance.”

Health and safety will be top priorities this season, Overturff said, with multiple layers of precautions in place. Performers and staff are fully vaccinated; studios are sanitized regularly; everyone completes a daily online symptom check; and dancers wear masks during rehearsals – although the masks will come off for performances, as permitted by national performing arts safety guidelines.

AMERICAN MIDWEST *Ballet*

Last season was productive for AMB in spite of the pandemic, Overturff said. Dancers took company classes virtually and worked with choreographers by video. With live performances off-limits, the company created innovative online programming that served more than 76,000 people, she said.

“But nothing else is like creating in a studio with your colleagues, or performing in a theater for an audience,” Overturff said. “Ballet life is full of routines and rituals that most of us have followed since we were children. Coming back to all of that really is like coming home again, and we’re thrilled to invite our audiences back to join us for Season 12!”

SEASON 12 IN DETAIL

The Nutcracker

November 20 at 2:00 and 7:30 pm & November 21, 2 pm

Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center, Council Bluffs

December 4 at 2:00 and 7:30 pm & December 5 at 2 pm

Orpheum Theater, Omaha

Although *The Nutcracker* is subtly updated every year, Overturff said, the Season 12 edition is getting a more comprehensive makeover. While the beloved story, iconic characters, and opulent design remain the same, she said, audiences will notice several fresh elements throughout the production.

A key factor behind the changes, she said, is safety. In past years, the company’s professional dancers had been joined onstage by community dancers as young as age seven. This year, for health reasons, community auditions were restricted to ages 12 and up – yielding a polished ensemble of 25 student dancers drawn from studios across the metro area.

“We’ll miss the enthusiasm our younger cast members brought to the production, but this change has given us the opportunity to explore some new directions,” she said.

The company’s professional dancers will have expanded roles in many scenes, Overturff said. Most notably, the role of Clara – the ballet’s young heroine – will be danced for the first time by an AMB company artist, she said. “Having a professional dancer in the role will bring a new dimension to the ballet,” she said.

Also new this year: the November 21 performance will be sensory-friendly, designed to increase accessibility for people on the autism spectrum. “We’re working closely with Autism Action Partnership to plan it, and look forward to introducing *The Nutcracker* to this audience,” Overturff said.

AMERICAN MIDWEST *Ballet*

Momentum

February 26 at 7:30 pm & February 27 at 2:00 pm
Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center, Council Bluffs

During the pandemic, Overturff said, AMB's *Going Solo* – a groundbreaking series of short dance films created for solo performers – was an important creative outlet for dancers and audiences alike. It also gave the company a chance to commission works from nationally-recognized guest choreographers, she said.

Now, she said, audiences will be able to see some of the series' most memorable works in live performances: Bob Fosse's *Trumpet Solo* from 'Sing, Sing, Sing,' staged by Fosse collaborator Ann Reinking and Broadway star Dylis Croman; *Ghost Light*, created by Ray Mercer, resident choreographer of the Ailey School; and Overturff's own Art Deco tribute *The Bee's Knees*.

Overturff said she plans to counterbalance the solo works with several large-group dances. One likely standout: a new classical ballet to the music of Tchaikovsky, created by incoming company member and choreographer Fredrick Davis, who will be joining AMB early in 2022. Davis, whose path from a homeless childhood to a ballet career was the subject of an award-winning PBS documentary, has been a company member of Dance Theatre of Harlem, a sought-after guest artist, and a guest choreographer for New York's Neville Dance Theatre.

Swing, Swing, Swing!

April 2 at 7:30 pm
Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center, Council Bluffs
April 9 at 7:30 pm
Orpheum Theater, Omaha

Swing, Swing, Swing!, a 1940s-themed ballet created by Chicago choreographer and showman Harrison McEldowney, was American Midwest Ballet's very first mainstage production in 2010, when the company was known as Ballet Nebraska. Overturff had planned to revive it in 2020 to celebrate the company's tenth anniversary. Then came the pandemic.

"We had run part of it on the morning of March 13, 2020, just hours before we made the difficult decision to suspend in-person operations," she said. "It was literally the last ballet we rehearsed before we shut down. Now, bringing it back seems more meaningful than ever. Harrison created it as a tribute to American

AMERICAN MIDWEST *BALLET*

resilience, to a time when Americans came together to surmount a challenge, and this is a perfect time to recall that era. Plus, it's terrific entertainment and a lot of fun!"

To add to the reunion spirit, Overturff said, bandleader and trumpeter Doyle Tipler will be reconstituting the DoyleMusic Combo, the live swing band that performed onstage with the dancers in the original 2010 production. "Performing in front of that band was an amazing experience," she said. "I can't wait to share the energy of live music and dance with our audiences."

Tickets for all three of American Midwest Ballet's Season 12 productions are available at amballet.org/tickets/.

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 engagement.

AMB's Season 12 is presented with the generous support of premier benefactors the Holland Foundation, the Fred and Eve Simon Charitable Foundation, and the Iowa West Foundation; season sponsors Omaha Steaks, Cindy and Scott Heider, the Peter Kiewit Foundation, and Douglas County; and major support from the Nebraska Arts Council, the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, and the Sherwood Foundation.

##