

AMERICAN MIDWEST *Ballet*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 25, 2025

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An unusual tea party, a ferocious Queen of Hearts, and a clumsy but kindly Knight are among Alice's encounters in Kennet Oberly's *Alice in Wonderland*, a ballet adaptation of Lewis Carroll's books. [Click to download photos.](#)

IMAGINATIVE *ALICE IN WONDERLAND* WRAPS UP AMERICAN MIDWEST BALLET'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

An imaginative fantasy adventure will wrap up American Midwest Ballet's 15th anniversary season when Kennet Oberly's *Alice in Wonderland* returns to the repertory this spring.

Rehearsals have begun for the production, coming April 12 and 13 to the Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center in Council Bluffs and April 26 and 27 to Omaha's Orpheum Theater. AMB's 25-member company of professional dancers will be joined by 50 community performers.

"Many people are familiar with the idea of *Alice in Wonderland*," AMB artistic director Erika Overturff said. "But you can really appreciate the sheer scope of invention and imagination in these stories when you see them brought to life on the stage. And that's exactly what Kennet Oberly did."

Overturff said that choreographer Oberly [1957-2016] combined characters and situations from both *Alice* books – *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* – in a blend that combines lively entertainment with insight into how children see the world.

"Kennet said that as children grow, they are always encountering new experiences and learning new things," Overturff said. "His choreography captures that feeling of childhood, where anything might be possible!"

The anything-is-possible feeling is heightened by the production's imaginative staging, Overturff said. "Many of the most iconic moments in the stories involve surprising transformations to everyday things," she said. "We bring those transformations to life on the stage – and we do it through dance! There are lively and life-size playing cards; the White Knight rides in on a gorgeous dancing horse created through a combination of dancers and scenery; the giant mushrooms that surround the Caterpillar appear to be elaborate scenery, then they begin to dance! It's all made visually appealing through colorful, playful, silly, creative costuming and scenery."

And there's more to the story than whimsy alone. "In our ballet, Alice is portrayed to be about 10 years old, the same age as the real-life Alice when the first book was published in 1865," Overturff said. "It's a time when children start to think about where they fit into the world – an idea Kennet wanted to explore through dance. The thread that ties the ballet together is Alice discovering who she is."

Company artist Erin Alarcón, who danced the role of Alice in Wonderland in AMB's original 2013 production and will dance it again this spring, shared some of the insights that choreographer Oberly gave her when she was first learning the role.

"As Kennet explained it to me, " she said, "each character teaches Alice a lesson – about either herself or about the world – that she needs to understand in order to grow into the person she will be."

"For me, one of the most poignant scenes in the ballet is one in which Alice meets a character called the Author. He brings out all the characters in her story and then hands the book to her, as if to say 'the story is in your hands'. I love the message that Kennet wove into this scene, telling Alice that she has the power to write her own story."

Tickets for *Alice in Wonderland* are on sale now; information is available at <https://amballet.org/tickets/>

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ABOUT AMERICAN MIDWEST BALLET

American Midwest Ballet [AMB] 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, our mission is to inspire people through dance programs of the highest quality: breathtaking performances, enriching education, and uplifting community engagement.

AMB's Season 15 is presented with the generous support of premiere benefactors the Holland Foundation, the Fred and Eve Simon Charitable Foundation, the Iowa West Foundation, Douglas County, and the Heider Family Foundation; season sponsor Omaha Steaks; and major supporters the Nebraska Arts Council, the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, and the Sherwood Foundation.

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KENNET OBERLY

GUEST CHOREOGRAPHER, *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*

Kennet Oberly [1957-2016] was a dancer, choreographer, teacher and artistic director whose legacy includes one of American Midwest Ballet's best-loved works, *Alice in Wonderland*.

Born in Pittsfield, Mass., Kennet developed an early passion for ballet and choreography. At age 14 he moved to Germany to study with John Cranko of the Stuttgart Ballet. After two years in Germany, he traveled the world, first as a professional dancer and then as a choreographer and teacher. His itinerary included Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and Estonia.

His career arc also included a period in Des Moines as ballet master and resident choreographer, then later artistic director, of Ballet Iowa, where he first created *Alice in Wonderland*. In 2013, American Midwest Ballet artistic director Erika Overturff commissioned him to restage the ballet for the company's third season, expanding the ballet with new roles and scenes. Combining favorite characters and scenes from Lewis Carroll's classics *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, this inventive and intriguing interpretation became a repertory favorite, revived for AMB's 15th anniversary season.

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About Alice and Her Adventures

“Curiouser and curiouser!” cried Alice (she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English)... – Chapter II, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

On July 4, 1862, Oxford University mathematics professor Charles Dodgson and a colleague went for a rowboat trip on the town’s river, taking as their guests the three young daughters of Dodgson’s college dean, Henry Liddell.

To entertain Lorina, Alice and Edith during the trip, Dodgson spun a fanciful tale of a girl named Alice and her imaginative adventures. The girls enjoyed the stories so much that they asked Dodgson to write them down. The afternoon’s entertainment eventually grew into two books: *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), both published under Dodgson’s pseudonym, “Lewis Carroll.”

Literary analysts have found the books to be filled with sophisticated wordplay inspired by Oxford life, public figures, language and literature, and mathematical theories; the peculiar seating arrangements at the Mad Hatter’s tea party, for example, represent a concept called “the ring of integers of an algebraic number field,” a widely-discussed topic among mathematicians of Dodgson’s day.

The books gained immediate and lasting popularity both with children and adults; avid readers of the original edition included Queen Victoria. Since its first publication, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* has never gone out of print, and has been translated into 97 languages.

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