

# Anniversary Special



Herb Migdall

The Joffrey Ballet tours five Iowa cities in nine days this summer.

The Joffrey Ballet in “Sometimes It Snows in April” from *Billboards*

The Joffrey Ballet embarks on an ambitious five-city tour throughout Iowa from June 29 to July 7 (see below). The \$900,000 project kicks off the 35th anniversary celebration of Hancher Auditorium, an arts presenter in Iowa City, and includes free performances at outdoor venues across the state.

“Hancher is part of the University of Iowa, and part of the school’s mission is to serve the state of Iowa,” says Charles Swanson, executive director of Hancher Auditorium. “We wanted to give a gift to the state. We thought about what organization has really meant so much to the history and the future of Hancher, and it didn’t take us long to realize that is The Joffrey Ballet.”

The Joffrey connection goes back to 1973, when the company performed during the venue’s second season. Since then, it has appeared there 16 times. Hancher also commissioned such notable works as Robert Joffrey’s *Nutcracker* in 1987 and the rock ballet *Billboards* in 1993. As a result, the anniversary tour program will open with “Sometimes It Snows in April” from *Billboards*, choreographed by Laura Dean. And in addition to the Grand Pas de Deux from *The Nutcracker*, the company will also present a ballet by co-founder and Artistic Director Emeritus Gerald Arpino, the *Pilobolus* work

*Untitled* and a preview of Pedro Ruiz’s new work, *San Juan; Allegro Con Sabor*.

“Because part of our history with Hancher was commissioning new works, a new work on the program was absolutely appropriate,” says Cameron Basden, Joffrey associate artistic director. *San Juan; Allegro Con Sabor*, she says, “will have a kind of Latin flavor and be fun.”

The full company of 41 dancers will make the tour. The open-air performances will take place after sunset.

“When dancers are onstage, there’s kind of a wall that you feel because the audience is in the dark,” says Basden, a former Joffrey dancer. “In these circumstances, the audience is going to be quite visible; there will be an intimacy about it. It will be very special for both the dancers and the audience.”

Swanson says he hopes the audiences will discover a love of dance. To further this goal, an educational component has been added in each location. Pierre Lockett, director of education and community engagement at the Joffrey, will lead a workshop for area residents, teaching a movement from “Sometimes It Snows in April.”

“This is what the company was founded on, bringing dance to the communities in America that ordinarily would not see ballet,” says Adam Sklute, outgoing Joffrey associate artistic director and newly appointed artistic director of Ballet West (see page 16). “It’s a great way to end our 50th anniversary.”

For more: [www.hancher.uiowa.edu](http://www.hancher.uiowa.edu)

Joffrey Ballet Iowa Tour

JUNE 29: Western Gateway Park, Des Moines

JULY 1: Bayliss Park, Council Bluffs

JULY 3: Weed Park, Muscatine

JULY 6: Brucemore Historical Mansion, Cedar Rapids

JULY 7: Hancher Green, Iowa City