

# STEP AFRIKA!

*THE MIGRATION:  
REFLECTIONS OF JACOB LAWRENCE*

Thursday, October 20, 2016, 7:30 pm



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Dear Chuck and the Hancher Staff,

Congratulations on the opening of the new, Cesar Pelli-designed Hancher Auditorium. It is truly a spectacular design and quite clearly a labor of love. Enclosed is our ad for the inside front cover of your program. Lazare Diamonds and Hands Jewelers are proud to be a part of your new building, your new season and your glorious future. We wish you and your staff many years of companies with a premier venue and the experiences of their lives.

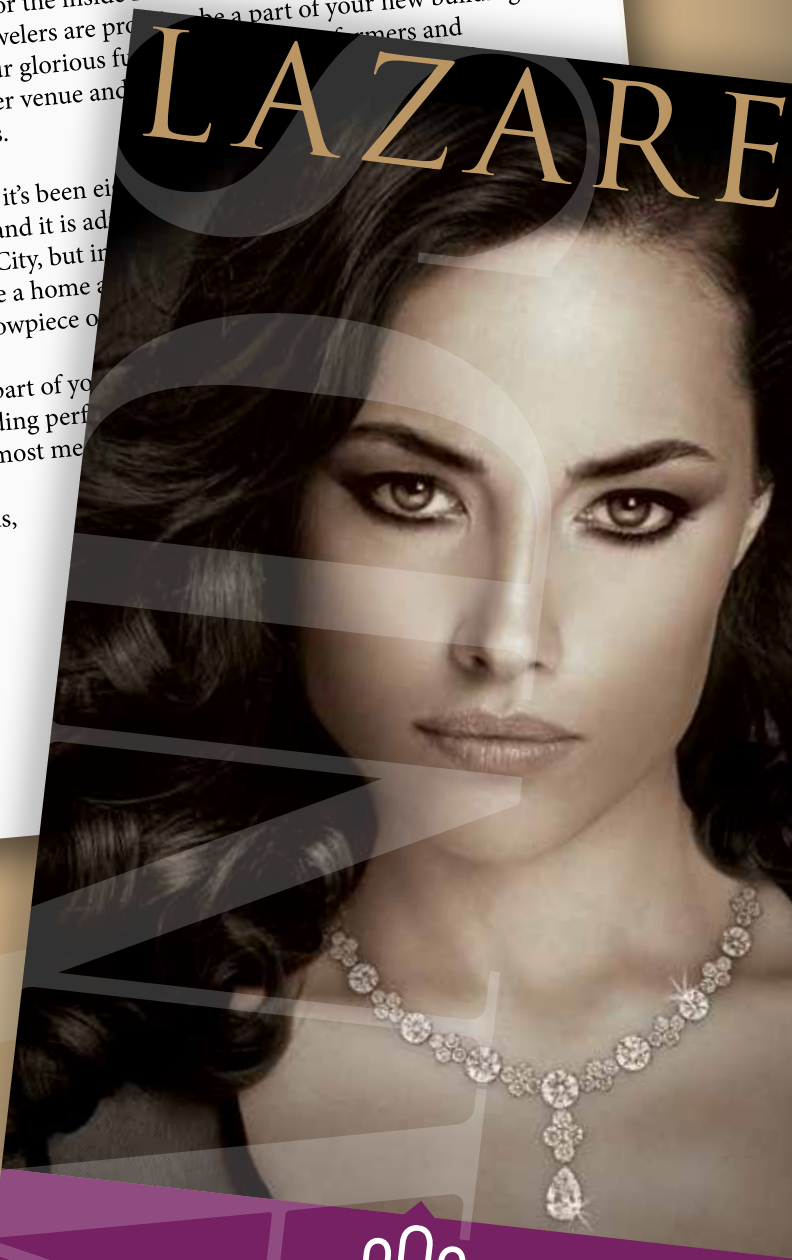
It is hard to believe that it's been eight years since the Hancher performing arts venue and it is still alive, not only in Iowa City, but in the state! And now we have a home for a brilliantly designed showpiece of architecture.

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**C. BRIAN WILLIAMS**

PRESENTS

# **THE MIGRATION: REFLECTIONS ON JACOB LAWRENCE**

FEATURING

**MFONISO AKPAN   MAKEDA ABRAHAM   CHRISTOPHER BRIENT  
DIONNE ELEBY   DELAUNCE JACKSON   JOE MURCHISON  
CHARISE PINKSTON   ANESIA SANDIFER   JAKARI SHERMAN  
BRITTNY SMITH   JORDAN SPRY   TA'QUEZ WHITTED**

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS

**ABDOU MUHAMMAD  
BAAKARI WILDER**

SCENIC DESIGN  
**HARLAN PENN**

COSTUME DESIGN  
**KENAN QUANDER**

SOUND DESIGN  
**PATRICK CALHOUN**

LIGHTING/PROJECTION DESIGN  
**JOHN D. ALEXANDER**

PRODUCTION/COMPANY MANAGER  
**JOHN D. ALEXANDER**

SOUND ENGINEER/ASST PRODUCTION MANAGER  
**CORY RAYNOR**

*The Migration* is made possible through commissioning support from Washington Performing Arts; Hancher Auditorium at University of Iowa; the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at Illinois; Ordway Center for the Performing Arts; and Meany Hall for Performing Arts at University of Washington.

Images from Jacob Lawrence's "The Migration Series" generously provided by The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC and the Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.





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# PROGRAM

“Must we remain in the South or go elsewhere?  
Where can we go to feel that security which  
other people feel?”

- *A Colored Woman in Alabama, 1902*

## DRUM CALL

Choreographed/Composed by: Jakari Sherman and W. E. Smith

Original Recording of “African Villages” by: W.E. Smith

The drum has always been essential to African culture everywhere and is critical to the rhythm of Migration. *Drum Call* depicts an African village, the arrival of foreign ships, and the ensuing turmoil.

## GO WEST: circa 1890

Choreographed by: Makeda Abraham, Mfoniso Akpan, and Delaunce Jackson

When Africans arrived in America, their music and dance traditions were ingrained in the culture. *Go West* explores how West African dance and drum traditions spread and maintained their vitality in the New World.

## DRUMFOLK

Choreographed by: David Pleasant

*Drumfolk* is a celebration of the early development of African-American percussive traditions including patting juba, hambone, and ring shout – giving way to art forms like tap dance and stepping. While exploring this heritage, *Drumfolk* reflects on the harsh conditions in the South that coincided with the practice of these transcendent musical forms. The work shows how the progression of such hardships preempted escape and migration, and how the fortitude of the enslaved led to the creation of new traditions like spirituals, field hollers, and shouts.

## WADE SUITE

Choreographed by: Kirsten Ledford, LeeAnet Noble, and Paul Woodruff

*Wade* shows the continuity in African and African-American percussive dance traditions by blending the South African Gumbo Dance, tap, and stepping with the African-American spiritual.

### Movement One: THE DEACON’S DANCE

The African-American spiritual played a significant role in lifting the spirit in troubled times. In *The Deacon’s Dance*, two deacons prepare for Sunday services.

## Movement Two: WADE

After the abolition of slavery, the church remained a center of refuge and community-building amidst the harsh conditions and served as a primary means of communication for industries recruiting labor during World War I. Wade highlights the importance of the church in helping African Americans survive the South, and its critical role in helping vulnerable migrants resettle in the North.

## INTERMISSION

“I was leaving the South to fling myself into the unknown. I was taking a part of the South to transplant in alien soil, to see if it could grow differently, if it could drink of new and cool rains, bend in strange winds, respond to the warmth of other suns, and, perhaps, to bloom.”

-Richard Wright

## TRANE SUITE

Original Recording of “Trane” by: W. E. Smith

Throughout the Great Migration, the train was an important means of transporting people to the North. The entire railroad industry recruited heavily in the South and thus, economically, became a primary means of African American’s “one-way ticket” to a new life. Named in reference to John Coltrane and paying homage to Duke Ellington’s “Take the ‘A’ Train,” *Trane* is a journey in three parts, following the story of the Great Migration.

### Movement One: TRANE

Choreographed by: Jakari Sherman

Creation of *Trane* made possible by the DC Jazz Festival

The opening movement, *Trane*, establishes the connection between past and present; the rhythm of the train north, Ellington’s classic score and the Alpha “train,” a traditional element of stepping practiced by brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

### Movement Two: OFF THE TRAIN

Choreographed by: Jakari Sherman

Three men arrive in the North, luggage in hand...thrilled about the possibilities.

## Movement Three: MY MAN'S GONE NOW

Choreographed by: Mfoniso Akpan, Aseelah Allen, Dionne Eleby, Kevin Marr, and Jakari Sherman

Recording of "My Man's Gone Now" by Nina Simone

During the migration, it was common for men to journey North without their wives or children because of the high cost of travel. This left many women at home in the South caring for children and struggling to find work. *My Man's Gone Now* is the story of three women, each in a different phase of their transition to the North and ready to be reunited with their loved one.

## CHICAGO

Choreographed by: Jakari Sherman

Between the 1910s and 1920, more than 400,000 African American migrants left the South for many Northern and Western cities, including Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Chicago. By the end of the 1920s, that number exceeded 1.2 million. Chicago finds the migrant's new rhythm in everyday situations; it is a percussive symphony using body percussion and vocals to highlight their collective self-transformation once these brave men and women arrived "Up North."



*During World War I there was a great migration north by southern Negroes*  
Painting by Jacob Lawrence (black-and-white reproduction of color original)

# THE COMPANY

**C. BRIAN WILLIAMS** (*Founder & Executive Director*) is a native of Houston, Texas, and graduate of Howard University. He first learned to step as a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. - Beta Chapter, in the spring of 1989. While living in Southern Africa, he began to research stepping, exploring the many sides of this exciting, yet under-recognized American art form and founded Step Afrika! in 1994. Brian has performed, lectured, and taught in Europe, Central & South America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and throughout the United States.

Brian is co-founder of the historic Step Afrika! International Cultural Festival in Johannesburg, South Africa. He has been cited as a “Civic/Community Visionary” by *NV Magazine*; a “Nation Builder” by the National Black Caucus of State Legislators; and one of DC’s leading “Arts Innovators” by *Washington Life Magazine*. He is the recipient of numerous Artist Fellowships; the Distinguished Arts Award from the Coalition for African-Americans in the Performing Arts; the Pola Nirenska Award for Contemporary Achievement in Dance and is featured in *Soulstepping*, the first book to document the history of stepping. Brian also earned the 2008 Mayor’s Art Award for Innovation in the Arts and has led the company to multiple Metro DC Dance Awards for “Outstanding New Work,” “Excellence in Stage Design/Multimedia,” and “Outstanding Group Performance.”

Brian currently serves as a Commissioner for the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities. Through his leadership, stepping has evolved into one of America’s greatest cultural exports and inspired the designation of Step Afrika! as Washington, DC’s official “Cultural Ambassador.”

**MFONISO AKPAN** (*Artistic Director*) has trained extensively in tap, ballet, jazz, modern, African dance, and step. While attending the State University of New York at Stony Brook, she majored in biochemistry and cultivated her stepping skills as a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Mfon began her training at the Bernice Johnson Cultural Arts Center and has performed at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, the Apollo Theater, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Lincoln Center. Mfon toured with the off-Broadway show *Hoofin’ 2 Hittin*, where she was a featured stepper and dancer.

**JAKARI SHERMAN** (*Co-Artistic Director*) is an intense performer, percussionist, and choreographer whose stepping experience extends over 20 years. Jakari served as the Artistic Director for eight years and brought new life to the folkloric tradition of stepping locally and across the globe. As a choreographer, he seeks to create a body of work that is experimental and challenging for both the dancer and the audience. Jakari studied Management Information Systems at the University of Houston and is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

**CHRISTOPHER BRIENT** (*Assistant Artistic Director*) is a native of Houston, Texas who performed in his first step show in the ninth grade, and has been addicted to the stage ever since. His love of dance began while attending Texas A&M University, where he taught hip hop classes, served as Step Master for the Potent Pi Omicron Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and earned a Bachelor’s of Science in Agricultural Journalism. He joined Step Afrika! in 2009.



**MAKEDA ABRAHAM** is an actress and dancer from Brooklyn, NY. She is a proud graduate of Howard University, where she received a BFA in Theatre Arts with a concentration in Acting. For Step Afrika!’s 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Makeda choreographed *Umngane*, with Mfoniso Akpan and Aseelah Shareef, for which she earned a 2010 Metro DC Dance Awards nomination for Outstanding New Work. Makeda is currently based in New York, living life to the fullest as a professional artist and entrepreneur. She is a proud member of D.I.V.A. Incorporated and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated.

**DIONNE ELEBY** is a graduate of Elon University where she majored in Musical Theater and minored in African-American Studies and Business Administration. A native of Atlanta, GA, Dionne has performed with the African American Dance Ensemble, ArtPark Regional Theatre, and Rotterdam’s Lef in Holland. She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

**DELAUNCE JACKSON** is a native of Cincinnati, Ohio. He studied dance and theater with local artist mentors Terri Brown and Jack Louiso. Delaunce went on to train and perform with Kankouran West African Dance Company, Step Afrika!, and tour both nationally and internationally with the off-Broadway percussive production *STOMP!* From the Lincoln Centers to the National Mall and Madagascar, he continues to discover the unbridled diversity and universal significance of percussive art in cultural communication and relations. Delaunce is a graduate of Howard University. He thanks the Creator for ordering his steps and his family for their undying love and support.

**JOE MURCHISON** comes to Step Afrika! from Lawton, Oklahoma. He began stepping in junior high school and continued performing at the University of Central Oklahoma, where he received a Bachelor’s of Science in Kinesiology. As President and Step Master of the Zeta Sigma chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Joe led his chapter to numerous step show competitions, earning both district and regional awards. He has also trained at the official school of the Dallas Black Dance Theatre.

**CHARISE PINKSTON** works as a freelance dancer, choreographer, model, and visual artist in DC. She obtained her B.F.A. in Dance Arts from Howard University and has trained with dance companies such as Lula Washington Dance Theatre, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, and Debbie Allen Dance Academy. She has performed the works of many talented choreographers including Hope Boykin, Assane Konte, and Ronald K. Brown. Charise continues to choreograph, provide technical dance training, and produce commissioned works for public and private events.

**ANESIA SANDIFER** is a native of Augusta, Georgia. She attended the University of Georgia where she received a BBA in Finance and a minor in Dance. She is also a member of the Zeta Psi chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc, where she served as Step Master. Anesia was a full scholarship recipient for the 2015 Debbie Allen Summer Intensive in Los Angeles, CA. She has performed on ESPN for the Special Olympics 2015 World Games and as a dancer for O.A.R. and Siedah Garrett.

**BRITTNY SMITH** is a native of Houston, Texas. She attended Southern University in Baton Rouge, LA, where she was a “Dancing Doll” before graduating from Texas Southern University. Brittny obtained a BA in Radio, TV and Film; a MA in Education; and also became a member of the Gamma Psi Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. Brittny appeared in *Stomp*

*The Yard 2* and has opened for musical acts including Miguel and The Dream.

**JORDAN SPRY** graduated from Howard University with a Bachelor's of Business Administration in Marketing. While at Howard, he stepped with the Drew Hall Step Team and served as a head coach for Drew.

**TA'QUEZ WHITTED** is a proud alumnus of Elizabeth City State University where he captained the step team and graduated with a Bachelors of Science in Criminal Justice. Ta'Quez started stepping in high school where he founded Mu Omega Psi Fraternity Step Team during his junior year to develop leadership and promote brotherhood and academic excellence.

**ABDOU MUHAMMAD** (*Percussionist*) began drumming at the age of three. He has studied extensively under Abdou Kunta, Sanga (drummer for Baba Olatunji), Dom Gaye, David Rock, and Melvin Deal. Abdou has served as lead drummer for African Heritage, Ezibu Muntu, and Coyaba Dance Theater.

**JOHN D. ALEXANDER** (*Lighting/Projection Designer*) recent designs include *Yellowman* by Dael Orlandersmith, directed by Thembi Duncan; *Riches* by Lee Blessing, directed by Paul Douglas Michnewicz; *Darius and Twig* by Calette Jennings, directed by Eleanor Holdridge; the national tour of *Anne and Emmett* by Janet Langhart Cohen, directed by Tom Jones II; and *Other Reasons to Die* by Bob Bartlett, directed by Gregg Henry. He also designed for Eugene O'Neill Theatre Festival, Source Theater Festival, George Mason University, Georgetown University, and Bowie State University. John is a graduate of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

# ABOUT STEP AFRIKA!

Founded in 1994 by C. Brian Williams, Step Afrika! is the first professional company dedicated to the tradition of stepping. It now ranks as one of the top ten African American dance companies in the United States.

The Company blends percussive dance styles practiced by historically African American fraternities and sororities, African traditional dance and influences from a variety of other dance and art forms. Performances are much more than dance shows; they integrate songs, storytelling, humor, and audience participation. The blend of technique, agility, and pure energy makes each performance unique and leaves the audience with their hearts pounding.

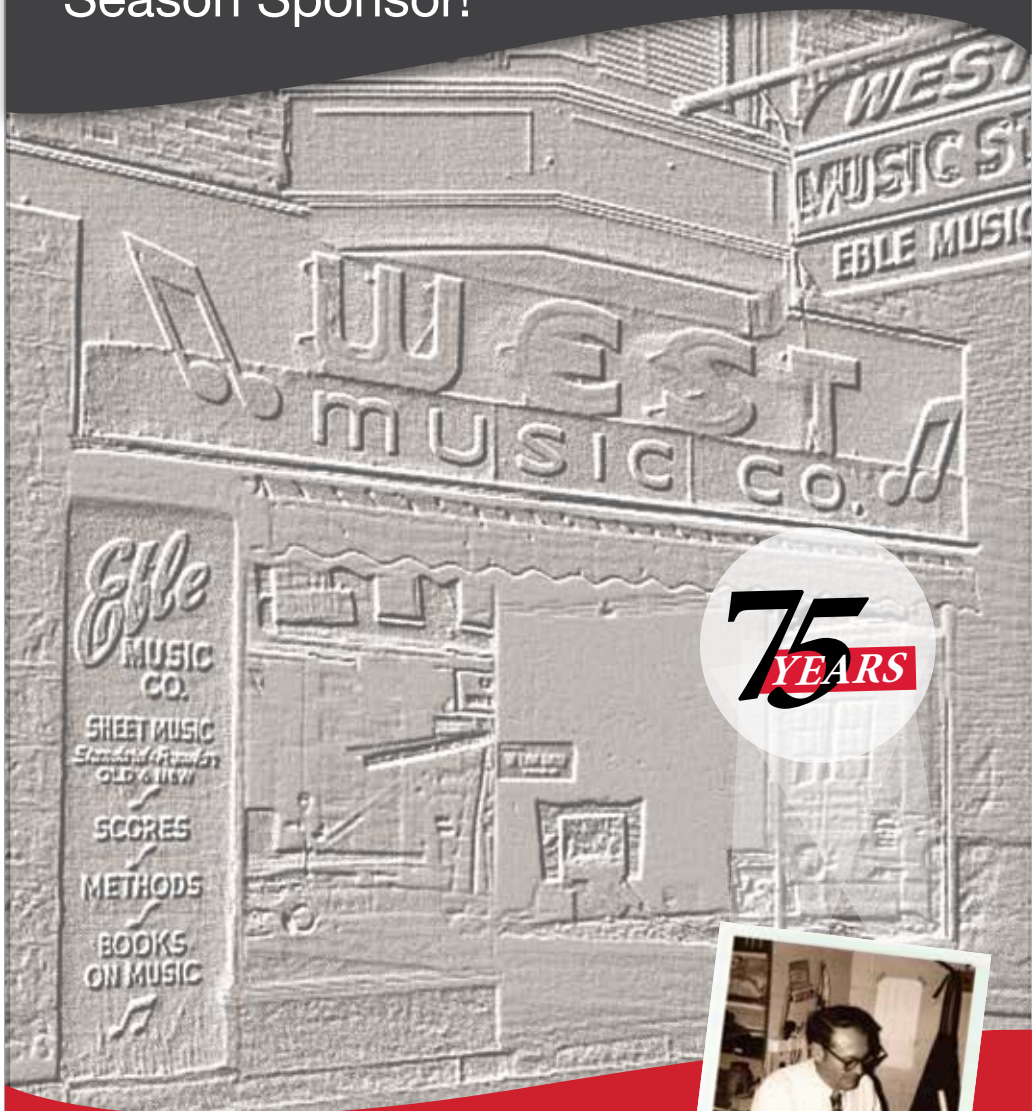
Step Afrika! promotes stepping as an educational tool for young people, focusing on teamwork, academic achievement and cross-cultural understanding. The Company reaches tens of thousands of Americans each year through a 50-city tour of colleges and theatres and performs globally as Washington DC's one and only Cultural Ambassador. Step Afrika! has earned Mayor's Arts Awards for Outstanding Contribution to Arts Education (2005); Innovation in the Arts (2008); and Excellence in an Artistic Discipline (2012); and most recently performed at the White House for President Barack Obama and the First Lady.

To learn more, visit [www.stepafrika.org](http://www.stepafrika.org).

## ABOUT THE MIGRATION SERIES

*The Migration Series*, by painter Jacob Lawrence, is jointly owned by The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. This epic 60 panel tempera painting series depicts the migration of thousands of African Americans from the rural southern to the industrial cities of the North between 1910-1930. Prior to 1910, ninety percent of African Americans lived in the South. Between 1910-1920 the African-American population in the North increased 65 percent. It was a movement on an epic scale with an impact similar to the migration from southern and eastern Europe into northern U.S. cities decades earlier. Both migratory historical events are universal and shaped the cultural landscape of America.

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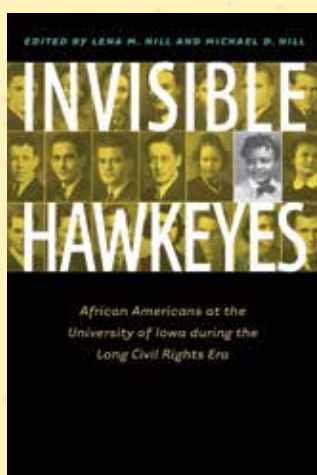
# INVISIBLE HAWKEYES: UI'S BLACK MIGRATION STORIES

Some UI stories remain largely untold. This makes telling them both exhilarating and essential, especially when an extraordinary stepping performance amplifies their meaning.

From the 1930s through the 1960s, the University of Iowa played a significant role in the Civil Rights Movement. Iowa City was not the site of famous sit-ins and violent confrontation; nonetheless, the university emerged as an important participant in the struggle for racial equality. During an era when many states restricted African American access to higher education, the UI welcomed black students seeking degrees in cutting edge art and performance programs. These students brought rare talent, indomitable will, and collaborative spirits to their studies, and their accomplishments burnished the reputation of the State University of Iowa. Their experiences represent a different kind of migration narrative.

In contrast to the most prevalent Great Migration accounts that trace rural black Southerners' journeys to new job opportunities in the urban North and Midwest, the story of young black people traveling from numerous cities to the UI remains a veritable secret. When these students departed from hometowns as varied as Houston, Washington, D.C., and Chicago, they set their sights on Iowa City as a destination of academic opportunity. Their educational odysseys at the UI reflect the difficulties of making dreams realities in mid-twentieth-century America.

The UI Press publication of *Invisible Hawkeyes: African Americans at the University of Iowa during the Long Civil Rights Era* and Hancher's commission of Step Afrika!'s *The Migration: Reflections of Jacob Lawrence* honor these remarkable stories of black achievement and resilience.



*Invisible Hawkeyes* includes chapters on the departments of Music, Fine Arts, and Theatre—as well as athletics and the Writers' Workshop—and features testimonials that movingly preserve the memories of black alumni. This printed account of black student experiences resonates powerfully with Step Afrika!'s *The Migration*.

Thus, with a long overdue flourish, we celebrate the black Hawkeyes who introduced American pluralism to a Midwestern and a national citizenry that often resisted such progress. These students' artistic and athletic expertise bridged cultural gaps and pushed forward the struggle for racial equality. Their accomplishments remind us of how the world of performance has long played—and continues to occupy—a pivotal role in the African American pursuit of the American Dream.

We are proud to pull back the curtain on this part of the UI history and magnify it with Step Afrika!'s unique art.

**Lena & Michael Hill**

Associate Professors of English & African American Studies



The Hancher Showcase—staffed and managed entirely by volunteers in the Hancher Guild—is filled with unique, high-quality items that you'll want for yourself or when you need a special gift.

Proceeds of all Showcase sales are used to support Hancher's educational programs.

The Showcase opens one hour prior to a performance's starting time and remains open through and after the performance.

The Showcase is also open on Wednesdays, from 10 am to 1 pm, and on Thursdays, from 4:30 to 7:30 pm, while the Stanley Café is open to the public for Thursday Nights at Hancher.



*Above: A nighttime scene of Hancher Auditorium hand-painted on a glass ornament, available at the Hancher Showcase.*

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Betty Woodman (American, 1930–), *Pillow Pitcher*, 1980, Porcelain, 22 x 20 1/2 x 18 in.  
Gift of Joan E. Mannheimer, 1991.223. ©Betty Woodman

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Photos: Bill Adams







# HANCHER AUDITORIUM OPENING NIGHT GALA SEPTEMBER 16, 2016

Photos: Bill Adams



Opening night marked the conclusion of a six-year partnership between Hancher executive director Chuck Swanson, left, and Hancher Auditorium architect César Pelli.



Steve Martin, right, and Martin Short, left, entertained a sold-out audience.

Opposite: After the show, Kansas City-based troupe Quixotic surprised the audience with a performance on the Hancher Green that culminated in fireworks.







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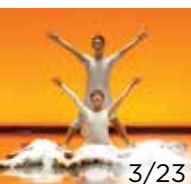
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3/3-4



3/9



3/23



5/4



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- 10/27 Maya Beiser, *The Day*
- 10/28 Laurie Lewis and the Right Hands
- 11/5 *Pomp, Brass, and Lunacy!*  
Tomáš Kubínek, Wycliffe Gordon,  
Orchestra Iowa, and University Choirs
- 11/11 Chucho Valdés Joe Lovano Quintet
- 12/1-4 The Joffrey Ballet, *The Nutcracker*
- 12/6 Emanuel Ax
- 12/9 Asleep at the Wheel  
*Merry Texas Christmas Y'all!*
- 1/20 The Cleveland Orchestra
- 1/27 Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion
- 1/31-2/5 *The Sound of Music*
- 2/8-9 *Soil*, conceived by Michael Sakamoto
- 2/11 The Ying Quartet with Billy Childs
- 2/16 Tanya Tagaq  
in concert with *Nanook of the North*
- 2/25-26 *MAMMA MIA!*
- 3/3-4 Circus Oz
- 3/5 Yo-Yo Ma - **SOLD OUT**
- 3/9 Las Cafeteras
- 3/23 Jessica Lang Dance
- 3/25 The Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra
- 3/30 Dr. David J. Skorton
- 4/4-9 Mission Creek Festival collaboration
- 4/14-15 Club Hancher: Fred Hersch Trio
- 5/4 */peh-LO-tah/*, Marc Bamuthi Joseph

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**Dates:** November 5 and 6, 2016

**Times:** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day

**Location:** UI Stead Family Children's Hospital (Iowa City)







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