

# Boston Sunday Herald

OCTOBER 12, 2003 ■ \$2.00

## Ballet's Mateo adds muscle to keen eye

Jose Mateo's Ballet Theatre in *Undercurrents*, at the Sanctuary Theatre, Cambridge, Friday; continues through Oct. 26.

By T.J. MEDREK

For years we've been able to count on ballets by Jose Mateo to be scrupulously refined and rendered with precision and aristocratic elegance by his company, Jose

### DANCE REVIEW

Mateo's Ballet Theatre. But in recent years the Cuban-born, Princeton-educated choreographer has been backing up his keen eye for form with increasing muscle.

Mateo's latest creation, "Suspect of Passion," nearly explodes with a speed and energy that, while always present in his best work, rarely have been its most prominent features.

Seen Friday at the Sanctuary Theatre in Harvard Square as part of the company's "Undercurrents" program running through Oct. 26, "Suspects" heralds an increased punch to Ma-



**MATEO:** Brings a new punch to his choreography.

teo's choreography, but one that doesn't sacrifice his trademark strong, classical foundation.

Lead couple Elizabeth Scnerban Shinzawa and Parren Ballard leapt and spun as if entirely controlled by the force of the music, a Schumann piano quintet. Even their quieter moments — including a long and extraordinarily lovely pas de deux — were infused with a tension that made even a garden-variety stock ballet pose seem like a major visual-dramatic event. That's called great choreography.

"Suspect" was the grand finale of an evening that included a return of "Courtly Lovers," new last spring, and a revival with revisions of Mateo's 1990 "The Last Circus."

The movement of "Courtly Lovers," set to Haydn's "Surprise" Symphony, has much of the energy of "Suspect." And its leads were danced fabulously by the ever-divine Meg Flaherty and the strong, stylish Cosmin Marculetiu. But the work's frequent "funny" bits were distractingly underlined. The gentle humor in the piece doesn't need it.

"Circus," to Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments, is an odd but compelling piece. The vague narrative of "peculiar characters of a timeless circus" given in the program notes doesn't really come across. I'm content to view the piece as a rather stately work that's full of images of chilling beauty and vague foreboding.