



Gwen Schanker

Follow

Journalism & Biology // Northeastern University // 2018

Mar 31 · 4 min read

## A Leap is Worth a Thousand Words

### Communicating Social Justice Issues Through Dance



Photo Credit: Gwen Schanker

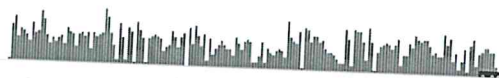


NU Sci  
Profile of M...

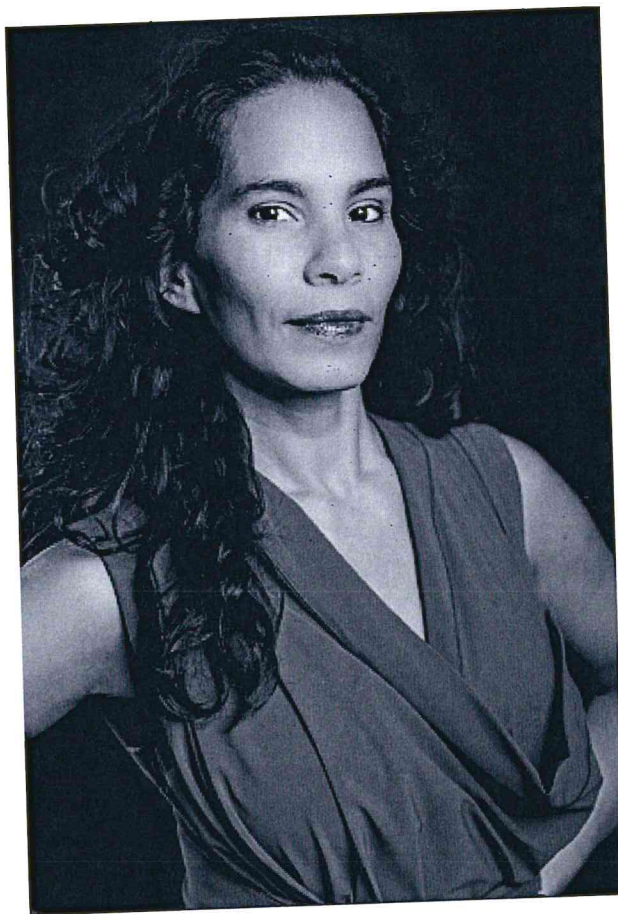
SOUNDCLOUD

Share

Cookie policy



On Monday, January 15, 2018, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum held a dynamic, all-day celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Among the participants were Marsha Parrilla and the other members of her Boston-based dance company, Danza Orgánica. Through their 40-minute performance, "Melaza," which they performed for an audience of over two hundred, Parrilla and her fellow dancers illustrated the colonial relationship between the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Their goal? To promote social change.



Marsha Parrilla // Photo Credit: Ernesto Galán

Parrilla, a Puerto Rico native who migrated to the U.S. when she was 22 years old, founded Danza Orgánica in 2007. Parrilla holds a Master's degree in dance education from New York University and is a strong believer in the power of storytelling through dance.

"I think the body stores a lot of information that we're not conscious of," she said. "I think verbally some things get blocked and the body is dying to get those things out."

Research on nonverbal communication shows that Parrilla is right. According to studies conducted in the 1960s by Dr. Albert Mehrabian on the importance of nonverbal communication, only seven percent of communication when speaking comes from the words spoken, while 38 percent comes from vocal tone and 55 percent from body language. This formula does not apply to every situation, but it's clear that nonverbal communication plays an important role in conveying messages. For that reason, a medium like dance lends itself well to Parrilla's mission of using movement to illustrate issues like racism, classism, and socioeconomic struggle.

...the three commonly referenced types of nonverbal communication, all of which are embodied in Parrilla's choreography. The first is *kinesics*, which refers to general bodily movement as well as facial movements and eye contact. In "Melaza," many of the dancers' movements incorporate a wavelike motion in the spine. This represents the importance of flexibility when it comes to surviving difficult situations—like the challenges of migrating from Puerto Rico to the U.S. or the realities of life after Hurricane Maria—as well as the flexible strength that allowed Puerto Rico's palm trees to survive the hurricane.

The second type of nonverbal communication is *haptics*, which refers to communication through touch. Haptics play a particularly important role in Danza Orgánica's performances, as the dancers hug and push one another aside in turn to represent different aspects of the complex relationship between the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Parrilla's use of touch in her choreography is directly related to her use of the third type of nonverbal communication, *proxemics*, which refers to distance. During many parts of "Melaza," the dancers move in a clump and are standing, sitting, or lying very close together. Like the other aspects of communication in Parrilla's choreography, the dancers' proximity is purposeful, illustrating everything from crowded living conditions at home to the support that family and friends have for one another.

*Verbal communication is certainly not the only, and not always the best, way to get a message across.*

The performance on January 15 was what Parrilla refers to as the "first phase" of "Melaza." Over the next two years, she and her colleagues will continue to work with artists in the U.S. and Puerto Rico to develop the second phase of the performance. Parrilla is also an artist in residence for the city of Boston for 2018. Throughout the year, she'll work with fellow artists, city employees, and community members to explore how art can be used to further local initiatives like climate change and immigration. Parrilla says the latter issue is especially close to her heart.

"When I moved to Boston I noticed it was quite segregated, and it was hard to find my place," she said. "I think it's very exciting to be in a place in my life where one thing that I identified as a problem in the city is now being highlighted by the city as a problem that they want to take on, and I'm part of that."

Vocal actions are impassioned expressions of feeling and are usually the first that come to mind when considering how best to communicate social justice issues. However, Danza Orgánica and Marsha Parrilla are proof that verbal communication is certainly not the only, and not always the best, way to get a message across. In some cases, nonverbal communication can be equally or more effective. The use of dance as a tool for promoting social change is worth further examination in a world full of loud voices and increasingly short attention spans.

*"I think verbally some things get blocked and the body is dying to get those things out."—Marsha Parrilla*

## **Last dance: With his company all grown up, Jose Mateo steps aside**

---

Posted Apr 3, 2018 at 5:22 PM

With major changes planned at Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre, this month is the last chance to see the choreographer's works for at least two years. Mateo, who directs the company, school and dance festival, will shed his role as company director while a search for a new director is underway.

"The public will not be seeing my work for the next two years, and there is something bittersweet about it," said Mateo, who grew up in Cuba and studied art history at Princeton before he started his company 32 years ago. "I fully understand that it's a necessity to have new artistic direction given the ambitiousness of our goals."

The final program, "Moving Violations," runs Friday through April 29 at the company's home, The Sanctuary Theater in Harvard Square, which features cabaret-style seating just feet from the dancers and wine and beer during the show. Mateo selected three of his most popular dances: "House of Ballet," "Schubert Adagio," and a selection of pas de deux to the music of Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera. He also choreographed an ambitious new work, *New Pasts*.

"I'm trying to respond to sum total of all my experiences over the last three decades with this company," said Mateo, who received the 2017 Commonwealth Award for Achievement from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. "And I'm trying to present the company as the ambassadors and interpreters of these works."

In anticipation of the transition to new leadership, a planning committee began meeting five years ago. It decided that the 17 company dancers will continue to perform "The Nutcracker," under Mateo's direction, but no other dances. If they stay with the troupe during the next two years, the dancers will teach at the school, which has about 325 students in Cambridge and Dorchester studios, and work on Dance for World Community, a free weekend festival in June featuring nearly 90 performing groups and a

the school and Dance for World Community, which also offers a film festival, dance forums and other outreach programs year-round.

“All three (the company, school and festival) have grown, and it’s time I share the responsibility with others,” he said. “As a founder, I’ve dedicated myself to making a success of the organization and creating a model that works, but it’s not sustainable in the long term to have a single choreographer who also directs everything.”

The Sanctuary Theater in Cambridge, however, will not be vacant, since other dance companies are expected to perform there.

“We’re hoping to help new companies in the community emerge with higher visibility and opportunity to perform,” he said.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, Dance for World Community will be June 9. It reflects Mateo’s belief that everyone can be a dancer and dance can be a force for improving the lives of individuals and communities.

Mateo said he is most proud of the way the company and the Dance for World Community Festival embody his philosophy of dance.

“My goal is not to push young people into dance careers, but to give them skills that will enrich them and prepare them to be more aware of the ways dance can be an important part of society,” he said. “My philosophy is holistic and inclusive, not for just a particular body type, but not at the expense of technical achievement. And I’m especially proud that the festival has been a way for everyone to understand the diversity of dance and develop an appreciation for all its forms and to see dance as an integral part of life.”



### **SIGN UP FOR DAILY E-MAIL**

Wake up to the day’s top news, delivered to your inbox

---

## An appreciation of José Mateo's New Classicism

**By Keith Powers, Correspondent**

Posted Apr 30, 2018 at 5:12 PM

Updated Apr 30, 2018 at 7:34 PM

At a climax in José Mateo's last ballet, "New Pasts," dancer Angie DeWolf exited slowly through a doorway at the back of the stage. The spotlight faded out.

You thought, "No, this can't be the end. That's much too sad."

Thankfully, that wasn't the end. Mateo's troupe returned to the stage for an energetic ensemble finale, and then the curtain finally fell. It was an appropriate comment on Mateo's retirement - an ending to one thing, but the continuation of others.

José Mateo Ballet Theatre, created 32 years ago by the Cuban-born dancer turned choreographer, will no longer present his original works. Mateo will continue with his other projects - his vast teaching programs in Cambridge and Dorchester, his seasonal "Nutcracker" performances, his enormous movement and social outreach event, Dance for World Community.

But his choreography - now numbering hundreds of concert dances in his New Classical style - will no longer be performed.

Mateo and his longtime life and artistic partner - José Mateo Ballet Theatre's managing director Scott Fraser - will hardly be retiring in leisure to their Cape Ann home in Annisquam. The energy and creative enthusiasm that allowed them to support a troupe, establish schools, develop programs for nontraditional audiences, and build the massive one-day "Dance for World Community" into a life-affirming event, knitting together the arts and the social programs - those will never be "retired."

The choreography will be missed. It's hard to have a perspective on what Mateo really has accomplished. The broader dance world has two successful models: one is the small, constantly touring modern dance troupe; the other,

Companies like JMBT, presenting new ballets by one choreographer, just don't exist anymore. Which makes this ending all the more historic, and this three-decade run of new work all the more important.

Mateo's New Classicism defies trends in choreography - and not just by working in ballet instead of modern dance. Contemporary choreographers create dances with identifiable signatures: dance lovers easily recognize Cunningham, Lang, Ailey, Tharp and others, from signature gestures and movement. Mateo almost never did that.

But his style never looked like it was taken from from a ballet textbook, either. He once said he thinks of his choreography as "incorporating 50 years of modern dance into ballet vocabulary." Mateo's ballets looked natural, organic and controlled - hardly ever virtuosic, demanding on the dancers or gymnastic. "More fluid, graceful, safer on the body," he has said.

And then there's the music. The appropriateness of Mateo's movement has always been most visible in the appropriateness of his musical settings. His Bach feels like Bach, danced; so, too, his Schnittke, his Ginastera, his Schubert, his Górecki. Mateo's music came from all eras, and his choreographic interpretations came from all directions.

That he chose to set his final premiere from young Bulgarian composer, Dobrinka Tabakova - whose "Suite in Old Style" sounded at times like Bach, at times like Nino Rota, at times like a gypsy fiddler had wandered into the room - says remarkable things about looking toward the past, and anticipating the future.

That appropriateness extended outward to the José Ballet Theatre experience. His intention was to create an intimate moment - a close understanding of the music through dance, and a close understanding of the dancers for the audience. His Harvard Square Sanctuary Theatre - could there be a more appropriately named venue? - kept audiences on the stage level, at café tables, sitting close together, to experience the performances.

Dance can be inherently voyeuristic: a remote audience, peering intently at physically gifted, attractive dancers in athletic movement. Mateo's dancers - far from the most physically talented troupe, but all invested artists - worked inches away from the audiences that admired them. This was never a "great



in new ideas, guided by a special genius, bringing it all lovingly to appreciative viewers.

It is a sad event for those audiences, and for his dancers - most of whom were weeping onstage at the conclusion of Sunday's final performance - that the three-decade glory of new choreography has come to an end. Dancers and audiences who have experienced 32 years of José Mateo's work, and those who will continue to experience his egoless efforts as a socially concerned artist, can try to find an appreciation that transcends that sadness.

*Keith Powers covers music and the arts for GateHouse Media and WBUR's ARTery.*

*Follow [@PowersKeith](#); email to [keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com](mailto:keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com)*



## An appreciation of José Mateo's New Classicism

By Keith Powers, Correspondent

Posted Apr 30, 2018 at 5:12 PM

Updated Apr 30, 2018 at 7:34 PM

At a climax in José Mateo's last ballet, "New Pasts," dancer Angie DeWolf exited slowly through a doorway at the back of the stage. The spotlight faded out.

You thought, "No, this can't be the end. That's much too sad."

Thankfully, that wasn't the end. Mateo's troupe returned to the stage for an energetic ensemble finale, and then the curtain finally fell. It was an appropriate comment on Mateo's retirement - an ending to one thing, but the continuation of others.

José Mateo Ballet Theatre, created 32 years ago by the Cuban-born dancer turned choreographer, will no longer present his original works. Mateo will continue with his other projects - his vast teaching programs in Cambridge and Dorchester, his seasonal "Nutcracker" performances, his enormous movement and social outreach event, Dance for World Community.

But his choreography - now numbering hundreds of concert dances in his New Classical style - will no longer be performed.

Mateo and his longtime life and artistic partner - José Mateo Ballet Theatre's managing director Scott Fraser - will hardly be retiring in leisure to their Cape Ann home in Annisquam. The energy and creative enthusiasm that allowed them to support a troupe, establish schools, develop programs for nontraditional audiences, and build the massive one-day "Dance for World Community" into a life-affirming event, knitting together the arts and the social programs - those will never be "retired."

The choreography will be missed. It's hard to have a perspective on what Mateo really has accomplished. The broader dance world has two successful models: one is the small, constantly touring modern dance troupe; the other,

Companies like JMBT, presenting new ballets by one choreographer, just don't exist anymore. Which makes this ending all the more historic, and this three-decade run of new work all the more important.

Mateo's New Classicism defies trends in choreography - and not just by working in ballet instead of modern dance. Contemporary choreographers create dances with identifiable signatures: dance lovers easily recognize Cunningham, Lang, Ailey, Tharp and others, from signature gestures and movement. Mateo almost never did that.

But his style never looked like it was taken from from a ballet textbook, either. He once said he thinks of his choreography as "incorporating 50 years of modern dance into ballet vocabulary." Mateo's ballets looked natural, organic and controlled - hardly ever virtuosic, demanding on the dancers or gymnastic. "More fluid, graceful, safer on the body," he has said.

And then there's the music. The appropriateness of Mateo's movement has always been most visible in the appropriateness of his musical settings. His Bach feels like Bach, danced; so, too, his Schnittke, his Ginastera, his Schubert, his Górecki. Mateo's music came from all eras, and his choreographic interpretations came from all directions.

That he chose to set his final premiere from young Bulgarian composer, Dobrinka Tabakova - whose "Suite in Old Style" sounded at times like Bach, at times like Nino Rota, at times like a gypsy fiddler had wandered into the room - says remarkable things about looking toward the past, and anticipating the future.

That appropriateness extended outward to the José Ballet Theatre experience. His intention was to create an intimate moment - a close understanding of the music through dance, and a close understanding of the dancers for the audience. His Harvard Square Sanctuary Theatre - could there be a more appropriately named venue? - kept audiences on the stage level, at café tables, sitting close together, to experience the performances.

Dance can be inherently voyeuristic: a remote audience, peering intently at physically gifted, attractive dancers in athletic movement. Mateo's dancers - far from the most physically talented troupe, but all invested artists - worked inches away from the audiences that admired them. This was never a "great

in new ideas, guided by a special genius, bringing it all lovingly to appreciative viewers.

It is a sad event for those audiences, and for his dancers - most of whom were weeping onstage at the conclusion of Sunday's final performance - that the three-decade glory of new choreography has come to an end. Dancers and audiences who have experienced 32 years of José Mateo's work, and those who will continue to experience his egoless efforts as a socially concerned artist, can try to find an appreciation that transcends that sadness.

---

*Keith Powers covers music and the arts for GateHouse Media and WBUR's ARTery.*

*Follow [@PowersKeith](#); email to [keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com](mailto:keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com)*



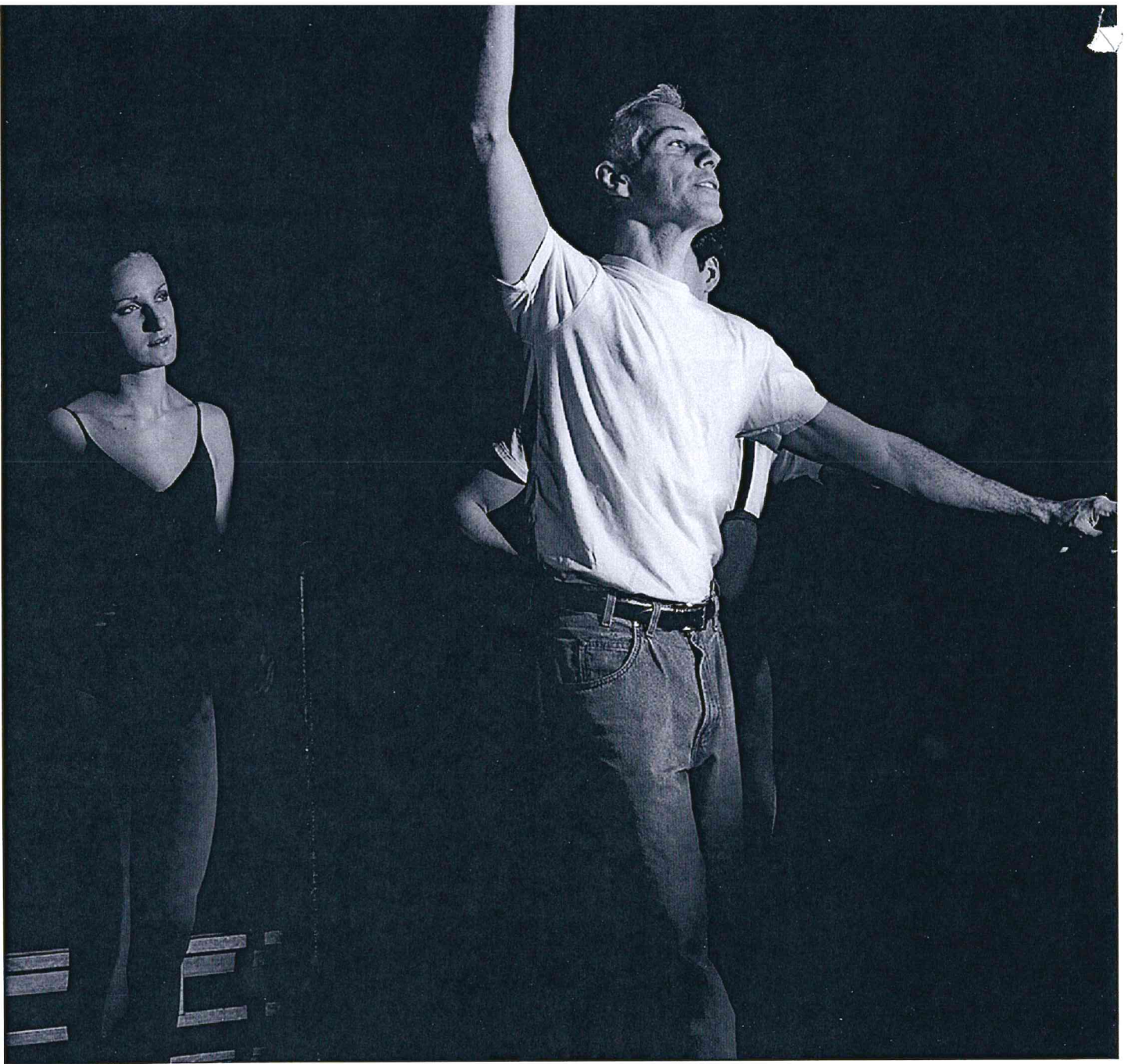
*the*  
**Improper**  
*Bostonian*  
(<http://www.improper.com>)

**ARTS & CULTURE ([HTTP://WWW.IMPROPER.COM/./ARTS-CULTURE/](http://www.improper.com/./arts-culture/))**

**Encore!**

Jose Mateo on his next act

**By Cathryn Haight (<http://www.improper.com/author/cathrynhaight/>) | Photo Credit: Gary Sloan  
| April 6, 2018**



(<https://twitter.com/share?>

[url=http://www.improper.com/arts-culture/encore/](http://www.improper.com/arts-culture/encore/))



(<https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?>

[u=http://www.improper.com/arts-culture/encore/](http://www.improper.com/arts-culture/encore/))



(<https://plus.google.com/share?>

[url=http://www.improper.com/arts-culture/encore/](http://www.improper.com/arts-culture/encore/))



(<http://www.tumblr.com/share/link?>

[url=http://www.improper.com/arts-culture/encore/](http://www.improper.com/arts-culture/encore/))



**A**fter 30 years of bringing original and classical ballets to life, **JOSE MATEO** is stepping down as artistic director of Cambridge's **Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre Company**. But the Moving Violations program running April 6-29 won't really be Mateo's final act. The local dance advocate will expand his school in Dorchester and continue working on the Harvard Square summer dance festival Dance for World Community. We chatted with Mateo about his past, his future and what's keeping him on his toes during this transition.

---

## LOOKING BACK

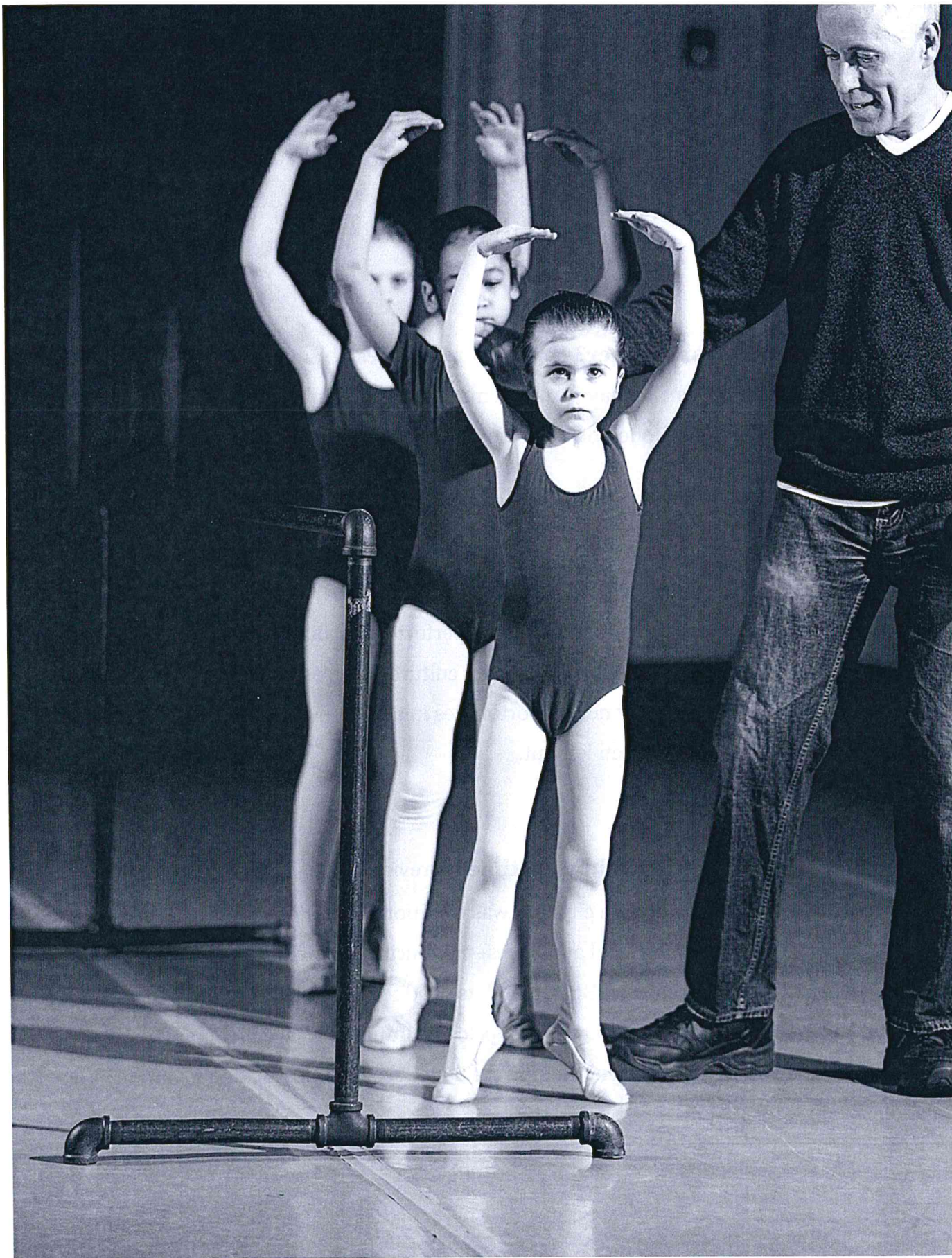
**What is the highlight of your career?** I am most proud of establishing Dance for World Community. Now in its 10th year, we have brought more cohesion and visibility to a broader dance community and created a model for repositioning the role of dance to build stronger, more inclusive local communities.

## LOOKING AHEAD

**What are you most excited about for the Dorchester school?** I have spent more than three decades working to diversify ballet training and performance, but in spite of all the recent publicity about changes in a traditionally exclusionary culture, progress is still unacceptably slow. The Dorchester school will open many new opportunities in achievement-based training that will benefit many who have historically been left out.

## LOOKING BACK

**How has dance in Boston evolved in your time?** A review in The Boston Globe about our company's debut referred to Boston as a city that was traditionally "inhospitable to dance." I have since spent a lot of years developing local audiences—no touring, no sights on national or international notoriety—just focused on Boston and its need for better dance. Thirty years later, I believe we've had an impact. Through Dance for World Community, I have met many people who are committed to their work and to strengthening the dance scene in Boston and I continue to be optimistic.



([http://www.improper.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/0411Extra\\_Jose\\_7149\\_Photo-Gary-Sloan\\_PC2.jpg](http://www.improper.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/0411Extra_Jose_7149_Photo-Gary-Sloan_PC2.jpg))

**What is your biggest achievement?** Given the odds for success, I suppose keeping a dance organization intact for over 30 years—let alone one that has provided so many programs—is what amazes most in the dance sector. Personally, I know that my biggest achievement is the less-noticed impact I may have had on the lives of individual students and dancers with whom I’ve worked.

---

### LOOKING AHEAD

**What is your biggest hope for the future?** That our culture comes to realize the power of dance as a way to strengthen our personal lives and community as a whole.

### LOOKING BACK


**Which one of your pieces encapsulates your time as director and why?** That’s a difficult question. I’ve created a fairly extensive repertory drawing on the genius of diverse masterful composers whose music caused me to explore different sides of myself, some more profoundly than others. They all evoke memories that are somehow dear to me.

### LOOKING AHEAD

**Which one of your pieces best represents the new direction of your career?** I am actually looking forward to a bit of separation from my own works in order to discover a new direction altogether. The ballets in the current program—House of Ballet, Schubert Adage, Timeless Attraction and New Pasts—could each indicate a particular direction I could decide to take, but I will be looking for something altogether different.

 (<https://twitter.com/share?url=http://www.improper.com/arts-culture/encore/>)

 (<https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=http://www.improper.com/arts-culture/encore/>)

 (<https://plus.google.com/share?url=http://www.improper.com/arts-culture/encore/>)

 (<http://www.tumblr.com/share/link?url=http://www.improper.com/arts-culture/encore/>)

## **Fashion**

**(<http://www.improper.com/bostons-best/2017/fashion/>)**

Stay a step ahead with our newsletter  
on the latest in Boston living.

**Sign me up (<https://visitor.r2>)**

**(<http://www.improper.com/events/>)**

# After 32 Years Directing His Ballet Theatre, José Mateo Shifts Focus To Education And Outreach

April 18, 2018 By Thea Singer



Ten young dancers, ages 15 to 21, stand rapt along three ballet barres in the main studio of José Mateo Ballet Theatre's school in the Old Cambridge Baptist Church. They're watching Mateo, dressed in comfortable jeans and a grey knit shirt with elbow patches, demonstrate not the position but the *essence* of a *cambré*, or upper body arch.

"After you turn the head and hand, both things go like a blade of grass," he says gently, his raised arm and sternum lifting toward the vaulted ceiling, his back arcing in response. "Like everything that comes from the soil, it's a little bit more subtle as it goes up."

The lesson captures the aesthetics that drive Mateo's choreography, the pedagogy that shapes his organization's school, and the spirit behind [Dance for World Community \(DWC\)](#), a set of community programs he launched in 2008, that aims, he says, "to reposition the role of dance, in all its forms, in the Greater Boston area."

More from WBUR



5 Things To Do This Weekend, From Women in Comedy Fest To



To José Mateo, ballet is a life force — for everyone, regardless of body type, age, background or level of proficiency. It's an artform, yes, but also so much more. He believes it improves lifelong physical and emotional health, sharpens critical-thinking skills, expands our understanding of cultures and nurtures collaboration and contributions to civic life.

Now Mateo, 66, wants to spread that philosophy further. His troupe is currently performing its last program under his direction, "[Moving Violations](#)." When the lights go down in the [Sanctuary Theatre](#) on April 29, Mateo, the company's sole choreographer for 32 years, will retire as artistic director, temporarily putting the troupe's repertory concerts on hold, save for the annual performance of its legendary "[Nutcracker](#)." The space will continue to be available to outside performing groups at affordable rates.

"In dreams begins responsibility," Yeats wrote as an epigraph to his 1914 poem, "Responsibilities." Mateo's move turns the phrase into action: He will now focus on further developing his school, which has studios in Cambridge and Dorchester, and his community outreach initiatives — the projects that drive his vision of ballet as an inclusive, life-enhancing endeavor.

Those in the dance community say it marks a seismic shift in the Boston ecosystem.

"Ballet Theatre is the only major ballet company in Boston other than the Boston Ballet," says Tony Williams, a former principal dancer with the Boston Ballet who has led the [Tony Williams Dance Center](#), in Jamaica Plain, for 18 years and presented his own version of the seasonal tale, the "[Urban Nutcracker](#)," since 2001. "So there's going to be a big hole in the dance community and the city, particularly for a chamber-size troupe."

### **From Women In Comedy Fest To Homegrown Hip-Hop**

The ARTery Apr 18, 2018

### **Using Theater As A Platform For Activism, Local Actors Join Groups Nationwide To Stage Play About Gun Violence**

 The ARTery 05:06 Apr 18, 2018

### **Actors' Shakespeare Project Makes 'Much Ado' About Gender Fluidity**

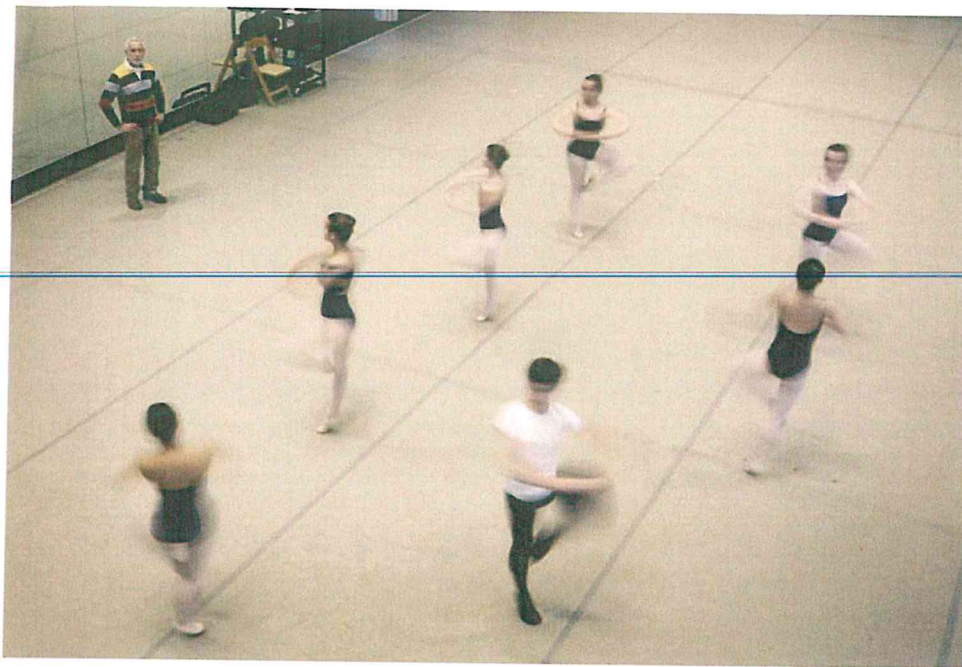
The ARTery Apr 17, 2018

### **Pushing Aside Political Frustrations, Christopher Moore Mined Humor For Pulp 1940s Universe Of 'Noir'**

The ARTery Apr 17, 2018







José Mateo teaches his students on a recent day in Cambridge. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

## Looking Forward

José Mateo Ballet Theatre (JMBT) has come to this place prepared. The transition has been in the works for more than five years. In 2013, the board of directors, under the leadership of Rick Shea, began exploring how the organization could preserve Mateo's legacy as an educator, choreographer and community builder, as well as pave the way for a smooth succession of leadership.

"An important part of the plan is to capture José's pedagogy, his instructional technique and approach, which is different from that of most ballet schools associated with a professional company," says Shea, who met Mateo in 1969 when they were both undergraduates at Princeton University taking a dance class taught by now renowned modern dancer/choreographer Ze'eva Cohen. Also crucial is to find a way to catalog Mateo's choreographic works — a tall order, given the elusive nature of dance.

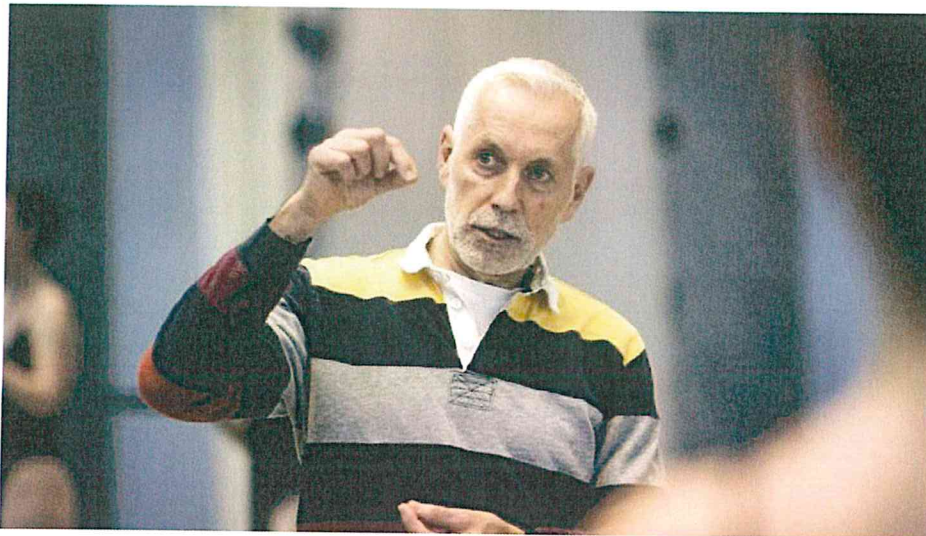
For Mateo, the shift brings sadness but also relief and opportunity. "My intention was always to start a different kind of model for a school, and a different kind of community outreach initiative," says Mateo. "I feel as though I've never really been able to either complete, or solidify, either of those models."

Now he can. With the jobs of choreographing and directing put aside, he will have more time and energy to expand and shape both DWC's activities and the school's educational offerings, particularly in Dorchester, which for the past two years has held classes in a studio at St. Mary's Episcopal Church. According to JMBT spokesperson Julie Miller, Mateo plans to grow the Dorchester program to mirror the one in Cambridge by 2026, offering not just a Young Dancers' Program, as it does now, but also classes for pre-professionals, teens and adults of all ages.



Now he can. With the jobs of choreographing and directing put aside, he will have more time and energy to expand and shape both DWC's activities and the school's educational offerings, particularly in Dorchester, which for the past two years has held classes in a studio at St. Mary's Episcopal Church. According to JMBT spokesperson Julie Miller, Mateo plans to grow the Dorchester program to mirror the one in Cambridge by 2026, offering not just a Young Dancers' Program, as it does now, but also classes for pre-professionals, teens and adults of all ages.

The selection of Dorchester, where the company first debuted at the Strand Theatre in 1987, came naturally. "Bringing ballet to new audiences has been a principal value of the school and the company from its inception," says Mateo, as has programming for community outreach. "After 30 years you realize, 'OK, there are certain populations that are going to be harder to reach than others, be it for cultural reasons, for geographic reasons, for economic or class reasons.'" Dorchester was one of them. So was Duxbury, a town that had no ballet until JMBT came there, and ran a program for 15 years.



José Mateo teaches ballet students at the Ballet Theatre in Cambridge. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

DWC, for its part, has already brought the organization's outreach to a new level. "It uses the power of dance to strengthen and build communities and support networks among dance organizations and other nonprofits and community organizations," says Shea. In addition to yearlong efforts such as Sponsor a Child in the "Nutcracker" and the Community Ticket Access Program, DWC holds a free annual summer festival in Harvard Square that typically draws about 20,000 people, says Miller. This year's festival — celebrating DWC's 10th anniversary — will feature a smorgasbord of indoor and outdoor performances by some 90 diverse participants on five stages.

"Let's show dance in all its forms, and all its formats, and all its styles," says Mateo, describing the festival's reason for being. "So that dances that once were not considered performance dances — they might have been traditional national dances, for example — can be brought to the stage and shared. Then we can begin to see the real breadth of dance, and the way different forms have for so long engaged so many populations. Let's provide the spaces, the environment, where education can happen in a different way than it has."



Mateo's unique role in the Boston dance community has not gone unnoticed. "When Boston Dance Alliance named José our Dr. Michael Shannon Dance Champion in 2012, it was a public recognition of his ongoing work as a company director and teacher," says Debra Cash, executive director of [Boston Dance Alliance](#), a nonprofit that supports local dance organizations. "I think Boston dance will look back at his legacy as an institution builder. With [managing director] Scott Fraser, José has been able to preserve and transform the space that became JMBT's Sanctuary Theatre, envision the inclusive community-building activities of Dance for World Community and the work going forward of bringing generations of young people to dance."

### A Different Kind Of Model

Mateo's description of the impetus behind DWC is a far cry from the elitist attitude that characterizes much of the ballet world.

His model for the school follows suit. It calls for the technique, athleticism and musicality of classicism, but not of the one-size-fits-all sort that most American ballet schools have adopted from the European and Russian academies. The emphasis is on the "breadth, the range of expression, that is possible through this artform," says Mateo. "That includes the diversity of human relationships that people can convey through movement, and that audiences can relate to. I'm focused a lot on the power of music as a conveyor of environments and worlds that are inhabited by human beings of different stripes and inclinations."

Accomplishing that requires personalized teaching and encouraging the development of the whole person. That means asking, "What can *your* body do, in ballet?" he says. "What are your hips, your shoulders doing? How are you holding that head up? What is your spine subjecting itself to? And to begin to understand the person's body, and begin to help them understand how they can take that very unique body, and apply it to learning the language of ballet."



A pillar of the local dance community, José Mateo is stepping back from directing his troupe to spend more time on education and outreach initiatives. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)



Patricia Chiang, 25, who has been with Mateo for 14 years, first in the Young Dancers' Program and now as a company member and teacher of children in the school, attests to the value of that humanistic approach. "José always instilled in me the value of achievement — but achievement across the board," says Chiang. "The fact that every student, no matter what their background, their body, their economic status, that every student deserves equal access to the same ballet education, which is not available to most people for financial or physical reasons.

---

"As a teacher, I have a very wide range of kids, and you never know what dance can mean to them. If you're only looking at, 'I want to produce the best dancers,' or, 'Who has the most flexible body?' you miss a lot. The power of dance and the feeling it can give kids is something that I think is underutilized especially in ballet because ballet historically has been so selective."

Unlike Chiang, Anita Walker, executive director of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, is not a dancer. But she, like so many others, has experienced the magic of Mateo's method.

"To José, we're all dancers," she says. One of the first times she met him was on a site visit with her colleagues — the council does site visits to all the organizations it funds with operating support. "I'll never forget when we first visited him in the studio in Cambridge at the church. Before I knew it, he had all of us at the barre doing *pliés*. It was such an amazing experience to do something that you only thought was for special people. We could dance. We were all special. That was a gift he gave all of us."

*José Mateo Ballet Theatre performs "Moving Violations," a program of four pieces, including the premiere of "New Pasts," through April 29 at the Sanctuary Theatre in the Old Cambridge Baptist Church.*







Advertisement

## 5 For Good: The power of dance helps Cambridge girl flourish

A scholarship to the Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre School helps student meet milestones



Updated: 7:37 PM EST Dec 28, 2017

**Erika Tarantal**   

Anchor/Reporter

**Cambridge, MASS** — A Cambridge-based ballet company is harnessing the power of dance and working to make the art form more inclusive. Jennifer Mancía credits a scholarship to the Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre with changing her 6-year-old daughter's life.

Olivia Dutra was born premature and because of that, her mother says she's had a number of challenges to overcome.



minted.

Advertisement

"She didn't speak until she was almost 3 years old. She did not walk until she was about 2 1/2," Mancia said.

Olivia is now a budding ballerina. She just finished performing as a mouse in the Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre's latest run of "The Nutcracker."

"You scurry instead of run," Olivia said, describing her role.

Olivia's mother said she's so grateful for the financial assistance from the ballet school.

"We couldn't be there if we weren't scholarship recipients," Mancia said. "That was huge for us, because we couldn't afford the therapies that Olivia needed."

Mancia said after just nine months of ballet, her daughter no longer needed therapy. She said dance has helped Olivia catch up with her peers developmentally and socially.

Jose Mateo, a professional dancer turned choreographer, said the power of ballet is multifaceted.

"For certain, it's fitness, it's an art form, it's a self-awareness discipline, and all of these things can be very healing," he said.

Mateo started his namesake ballet company more than three decades ago, committed to excellence and community outreach.

"Dance is something that belongs to everyone," Mateo said. "One of the things that our organization has worked hard to do is to provide access in a very inclusive way that invites and welcomes diversity."

Follow this story to get instant e-mail alerts from **WCVB** on the latest developments and related topics.

## Sponsored Content



June 17, 2018

### Take a Summer Vacation...From Grocery Shopping

It's time to tack back the hours lost in the grocery store.

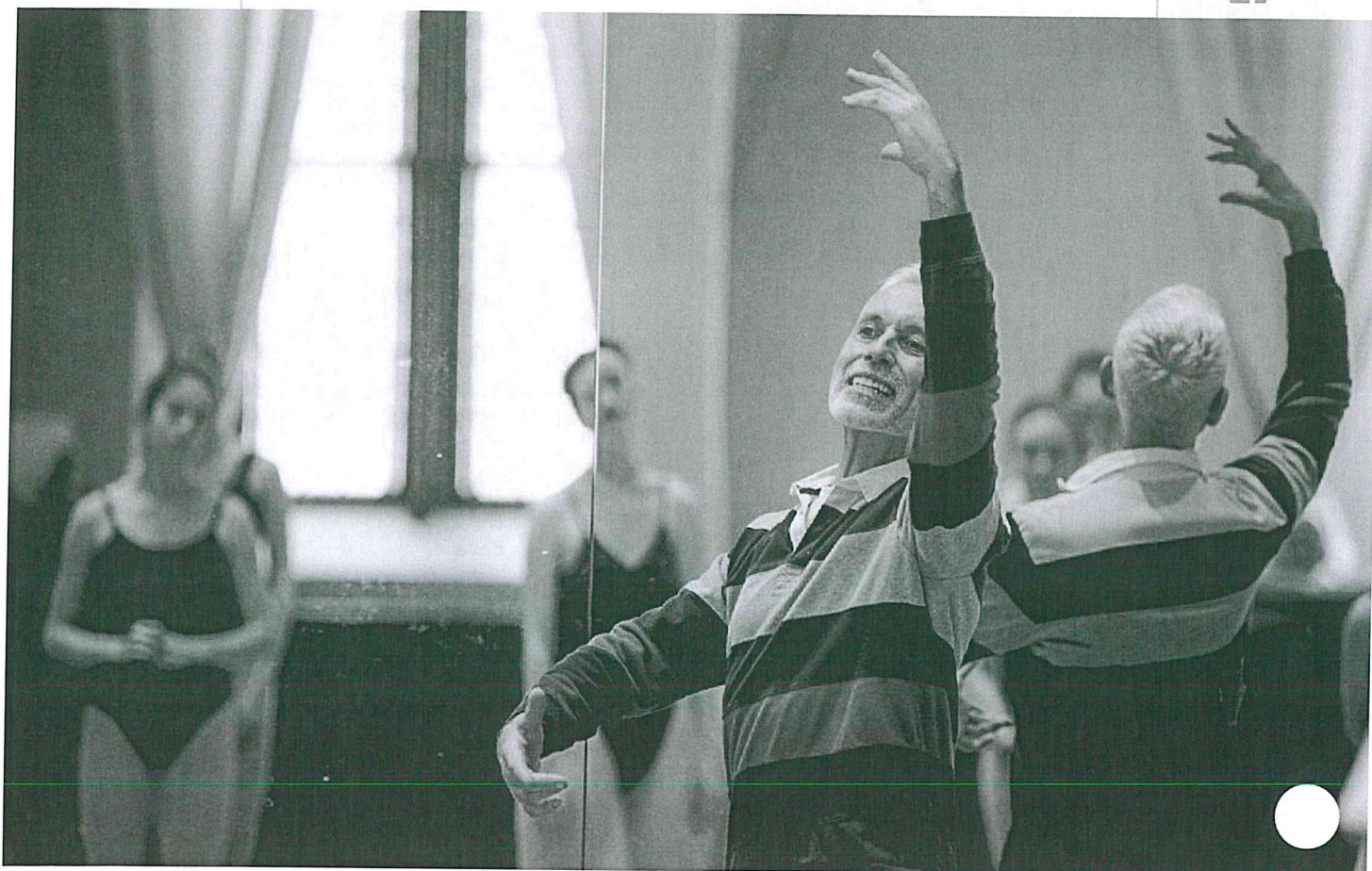
By Wegmans



# After 32 Years Directing His Ballet Theatre, José Mateo Shifts Focus To Education And Outreach

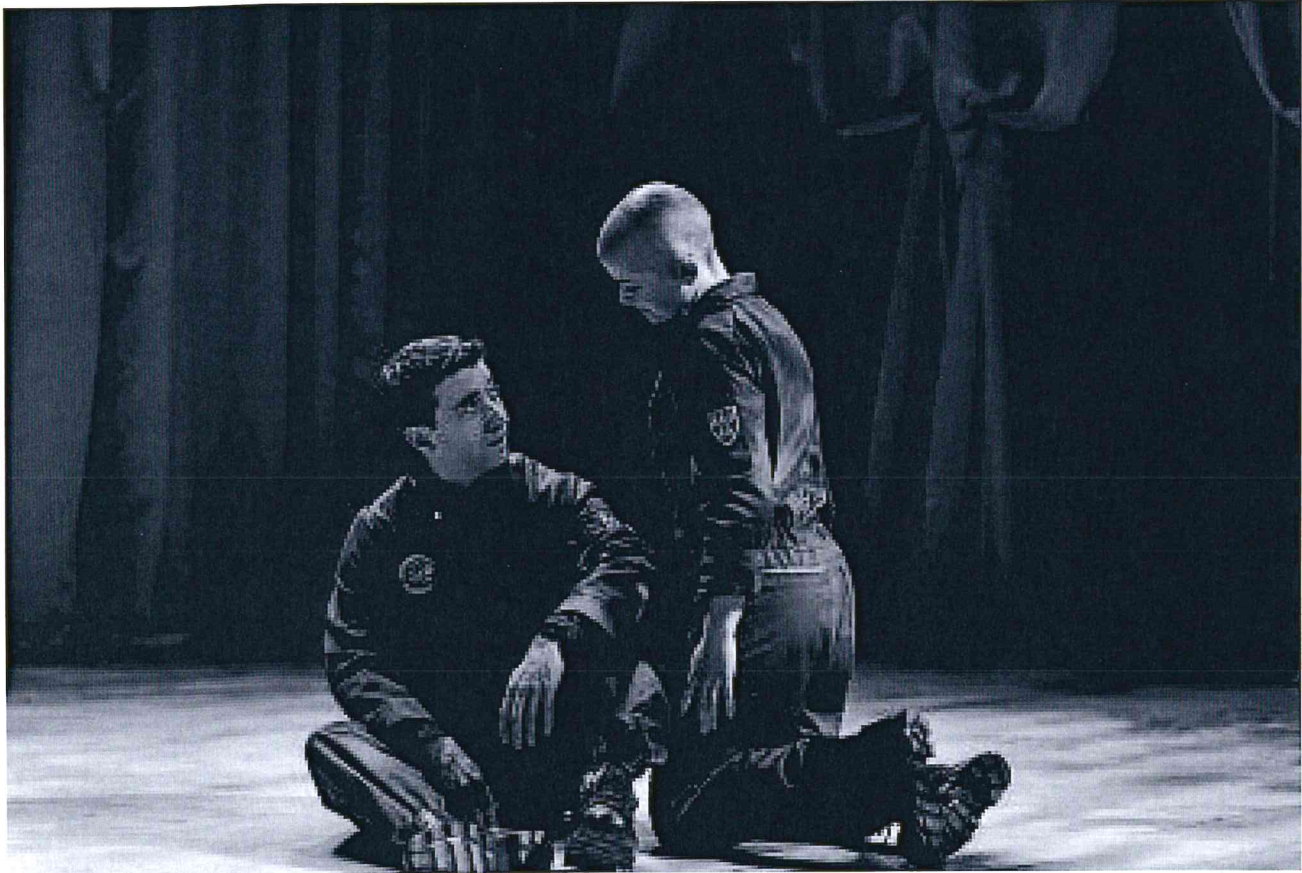
April 18, 2018

By Thea Singer



Ten young dancers, ages 15 to 21, stand rapt along three ballet barres in the main studio of José Mateo Ballet Theatre's school in the Old Cambridge Baptist Church. They're watching Mateo, dressed in comfortable jeans and a grey knit shirt with elbow patches, demonstrate not the position but the *essence* of a *cambré*, or upper body arch.

"After you turn the head and hand, both things go like a blade of grass," he says gently, his raised arm and sternum lifting toward the vaulted ceiling, his back arcing in response. "Like everything that comes from the soil, it's a little bit more subtle as it goes up."



### **Actors' Shakespeare Project Makes 'Much Ado' About Gender Fluidity**

The ARTery Apr 17, 2018

---

### **Pushing Aside Political Frustrations, Christopher Moore Mined Humor For Pulp 1940s Universe Of 'Noir'**

The ARTery Apr 17, 2018

The lesson captures the aesthetics that drive Mateo's choreography, the pedagogy that shapes his organization's school, and the spirit behind Dance for World Community (DWC), a set of community programs he launched in 2008, that aims, he says, "to reposition the role of dance, in all its forms, in the Greater Boston area."

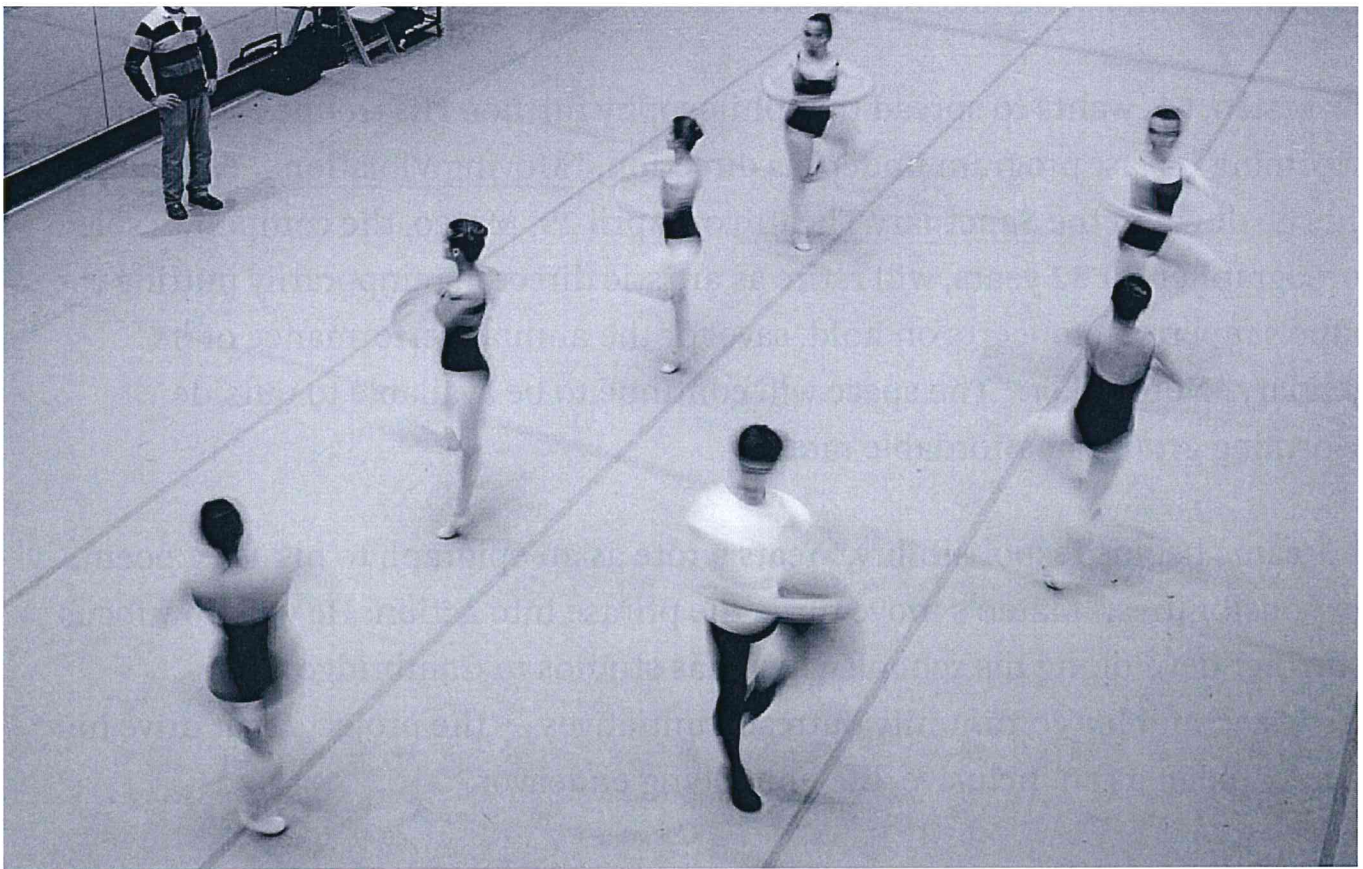
To José Mateo, ballet is a life force — for everyone, regardless of body type, age, background or level of proficiency. It's an artform, yes, but also so much more. He believes it improves lifelong physical and emotional health, sharpens critical-

Now Mateo, 66, wants to spread that philosophy further. His troupe is currently performing its last program under his direction, "Moving Violations." When the lights go down in the Sanctuary Theatre on April 29, Mateo, the company's sole choreographer for 32 years, will retire as artistic director, temporarily putting the troupe's repertory concerts on hold, save for the annual performance of its legendary "Nutcracker." The space will continue to be available to outside performing groups at affordable rates.

"In dreams begins responsibility," Yeats wrote as an epigraph to his 1914 poem, "Responsibilities." Mateo's move turns the phrase into action: He will now focus on further developing his school, which has studios in Cambridge and Dorchester, and his community outreach initiatives — the projects that drive his vision of ballet as an inclusive, life-enhancing endeavor.

Those in the dance community say it marks a seismic shift in the Boston ecosystem.

"Ballet Theatre is the only major ballet company in Boston other than the Boston Ballet," says Tony Williams, a former principal dancer with the Boston Ballet who has led the Tony Williams Dance Center, in Jamaica Plain, for 18 years and presented his own version of the seasonal tale, the "Urban Nutcracker," since 2001. "So there's going to be a big hole in the dance community and the city, particularly for a chamber-size troupe."



José Mateo teaches his students on a recent day in Cambridge. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

## Looking Forward

José Mateo Ballet Theatre (JMBT) has come to this place prepared. The transition has been in the works for more than five years. In 2013, the board of directors, under the leadership of Rick Shea, began exploring how the organization could preserve Mateo’s legacy as an educator, choreographer and community builder, as well as pave the way for a smooth succession of leadership.

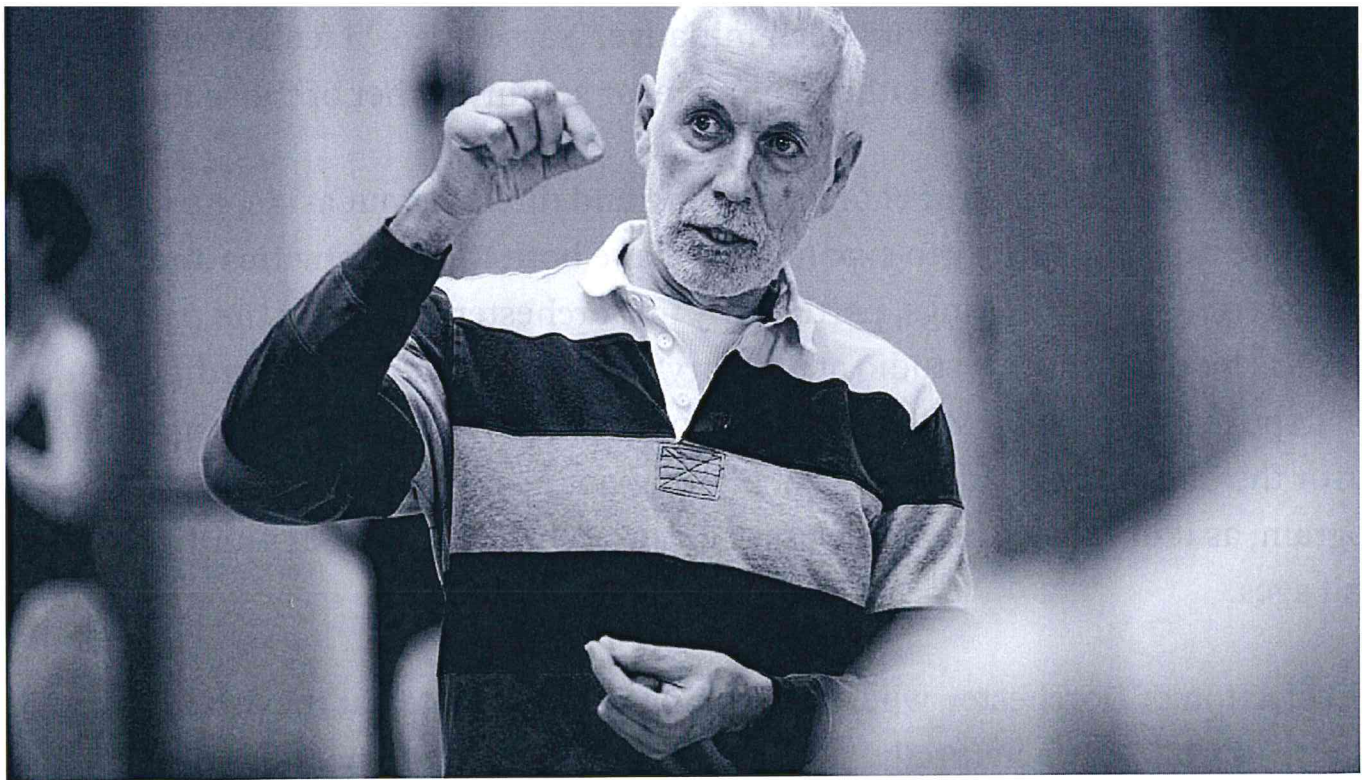
“An important part of the plan is to capture José’s pedagogy, his instructional technique and approach, which is different from that of most ballet schools associated with a professional company,” says Shea, who met Mateo in 1969 when they were both undergraduates at Princeton University taking a dance class taught by now renowned modern dancer/choreographer Ze’eva Cohen. Also crucial is to find a way to catalog Mateo’s choreographic works — a tall order, given the elusive nature of dance.



different kind of community outreach initiative,” says Mateo. “I feel as though I’ve never really been able to either complete, or solidify, either of those models.”

Now he can. With the jobs of choreographing and directing put aside, he will have more time and energy to expand and shape both DWC’s activities and the school’s educational offerings, particularly in Dorchester, which for the past two years has held classes in a studio at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church. According to JMBT spokesperson Julie Miller, Mateo plans to grow the Dorchester program to mirror the one in Cambridge by 2026, offering not just a Young Dancers’ Program, as it does now, but also classes for pre-professionals, teens and adults of all ages.

The selection of Dorchester, where the company first debuted at the Strand Theatre in 1987, came naturally. “Bringing ballet to new audiences has been a principal value of the school and the company from its inception,” says Mateo, as has programming for community outreach. “After 30 years you realize, ‘OK, there are certain populations that are going to be harder to reach than others, be it for cultural reasons, for geographic reasons, for economic or class reasons.’ ” Dorchester was one of them. So was Duxbury, a town that had no ballet until JMBT came there, and ran a program for 15 years.



José Mateo teaches ballet students at the Ballet Theatre in Cambridge. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

DWC, for its part, has already brought the organization's outreach to a new level. "It uses the power of dance to strengthen and build communities and support networks among dance organizations and other nonprofits and community organizations," says Shea. In addition to yearlong efforts such as Sponsor a Child in the "Nutcracker" and the Community Ticket Access Program, DWC holds a free annual summer festival in Harvard Square that typically draws about 20,000 people, says Miller. This year's festival — celebrating DWC's 10th anniversary — will feature a smorgasbord of indoor and outdoor performances by some 90 diverse participants on five stages.

"Let's show dance in all its forms, and all its formats, and all its styles," says Mateo, describing the festival's reason for being. "So that dances that once were not considered performance dances — they might have been traditional national dances, for example — can be brought to the stage and shared. Then we can begin to see the real breadth of dance, and the way different forms have for so long engaged so many populations. Let's provide the spaces, the environment, where education can happen in a different way than it has."

Champion in 2012, it was a public recognition of his ongoing work as a company director and teacher,” says Debra Cash, executive director of Boston Dance Alliance, a nonprofit that supports local dance organizations. “I think Boston dance will look back at his legacy as an institution builder. With [managing director] Scott Fraser, José has been able to preserve and transform the space that became JMBT’s Sanctuary Theatre, envision the inclusive community-building activities of Dance for World Community and the work going forward of bringing generations of young people to dance.”

### **A Different Kind Of Model**

Mateo’s description of the impetus behind DWC is a far cry from the elitist attitude that characterizes much of the ballet world.

His model for the school follows suit. It calls for the technique, athleticism and musicality of classicism, but not of the one-size-fits-all sort that most American ballet schools have adopted from the European and Russian academies. The emphasis is on the “breadth, the range of expression, that is possible through this artform,” says Mateo. “That includes the diversity of human relationships that people can convey through movement, and that audiences can relate to. I’m focused a lot on the power of music as a conveyor of environments and worlds that are inhabited by human beings of different stripes and inclinations.”

Accomplishing that requires personalized teaching and encouraging the development of the whole person. That means asking, “What can *your* body do, in ballet?” he says. “What are your hips, your shoulders doing? How are you holding that head up? What is your spine subjecting itself to? And to begin to understand the person’s body, and begin to help them understand how they can take that very unique body, and apply it to learning the language of ballet.”



A pillar of the local dance community, José Mateo is stepping back from directing his troupe to spend more time on education and outreach initiatives. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

Patricia Chiang, 25, who has been with Mateo for 14 years, first in the Young Dancers' Program and now as a company member and teacher of children in the school, attests to the value of that humanistic approach. "José always instilled in me the value of achievement — but achievement across the board," says Chiang. "The fact that every student, no matter what their background, their body, their economic status, that every student deserves equal access to the same ballet education, which is not available to most people for financial or physical reasons.

"As a teacher, I have a very wide range of kids, and you never know what dance can mean to them. If you're only looking at, 'I want to produce the best dancers,' or, 'Who has the most flexible body?' you miss a lot. The power of dance and the feeling it can give kids is something that I think is underutilized especially in ballet because ballet historically has been so selective."

Unlike Chiang, Anita Walker, executive director of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, is not a dancer. But she, like so many others, has experienced the magic of Mateo's method.

she visit with her colleagues — the council does she visits to all the organizations it funds with operating support. “I’ll never forget when we first visited him in the studio in Cambridge at the church. Before I knew it, he had all of us at the barre doing *pliés*. It was such an amazing experience to do something that you only thought was for special people. We could dance. We were all special. That was a gift he gave all of us.”

---

*José Mateo Ballet Theatre performs "Moving Violations," a program of four pieces, including the premiere of "New Pasts," through April 29 at the Sanctuary Theatre in the Old Cambridge Baptist Church.*

## Related:

---

- Ballet, Flamenco, Hip Hop — Dance For World Community And Social Change
- In Jose Mateo's 'The Nutcracker,' Diversity Stands Out

---

+ **Join the discussion**



[View comment\(s\)](#)

## Arts And Culture In Your Inbox

Get reviews, previews and features from The ARTery delivered to your inbox weekly.

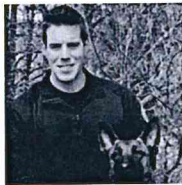


## 5 Things To Do This Weekend, From Women In Comedy Fest To Homegrown Hip-Hop

Plus see a new documentary at the Coolidge shows a more intimate side to pop star Grace Jones and visit your local record store Saturday for special edition vinyl.

The ARTery 1 hour ago

---

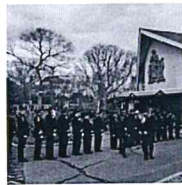


## Killing Of Yarmouth Police Officer Renews Calls For Death Penalty

The death of Sean Gannon, a Yarmouth K-9 officer who was fatally shot while serving an arrest warrant, has again raised the issue in Massachusetts.

WBUR News 4 hours ago

---



## Thousands Attend Funeral For Yarmouth K-9 Officer Killed In Line Of Duty

Sean Gannon was fatally shot while serving a warrant in Barnstable last week. He was 32.

WBUR News 4 hours ago

---



## Report: State Troopers At Logan Got Vehicle Per Diems

Another previously hidden perk for Massachusetts State Police troopers has been revealed -- a \$40 per diem for troopers driving their own cars to Logan Airport.

WBUR News 5 hours ago

---



## Baker: Criminal Justice Reform Comes With A Price Tag

Implementing a massive criminal justice reform law signed last week will cost the state an estimated \$15 million this fiscal year and as much as \$40 million next year, according...

WBUR News 5 hours ago

---

## Massachusetts Remembers Barbara Bush

Across the country and New England, people are remembering Barbara Bush, the former first lady who died Tuesday at age 92.

WBUR News 02:11 7 hours ago

---



## Violence

The gang known has become President Trump's symbol of what's wrong with illegal immigration. The criminal case in Boston is the largest in the country against MS-13.

WBUR News 08:13 9 hours ago



## Forecast: One More Storm Before Things Improve

It won't be 60 degrees this afternoon, but with the sunshine, lack of rain and temperatures in the lower 50s, it will feel more like spring. But temperatures tomorrow will...

WBUR News 10 hours ago



## Boston Tech Accelerator Aims To Fix 'Dividing Line' In Funding For Minority Entrepreneurs

Funding is one of the most persistent barriers for minority entrepreneurs. Hoping to fix that, Smarter In The City is the first tech accelerator in Roxbury.

Bostonmix 04:16 11 hours ago



## School Vacation 'Academies' Aim For 'Adrenaline Shot' Of Progress For Struggling Students — And Teachers

There are 28 Boston schools playing host to what are called "acceleration academies," where some students and teachers have given up their February and April vacations to get ahead.

Edify 05:07 11 hours ago



## It's OK To Be Conflicted About Abortion — You're Not Alone

I understand that ardent pro-choice readers will disagree with me, writes Rich Barlow. What they may not know is that the rest of the world is not so ardent.

Cognoscenti 11 hours ago





# After 32 Years Directing His Ballet Theatre, José Mateo Shifts Focus To Education And Outreach

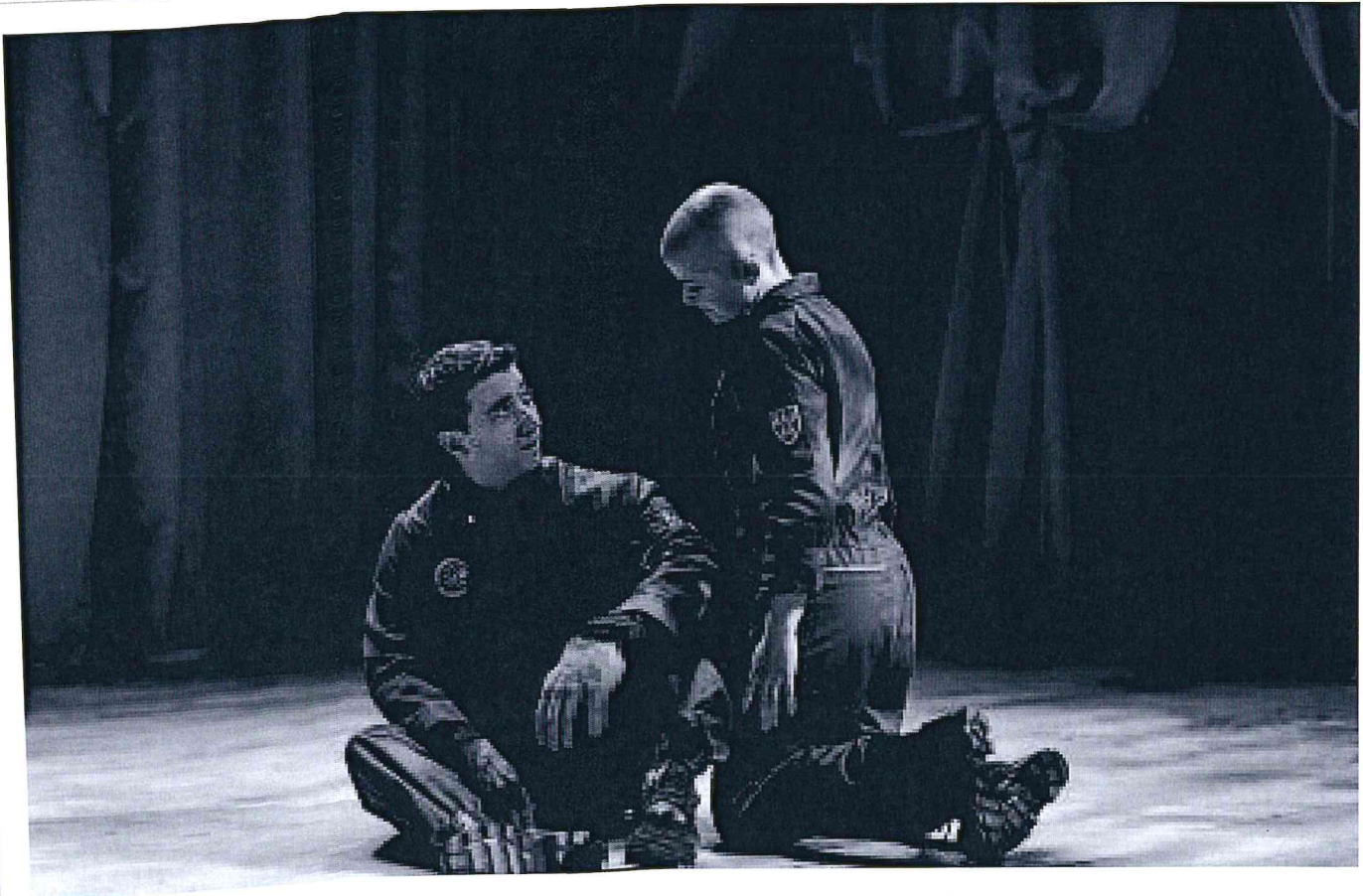
April 18, 2018

By Thea Singer



Ten young dancers, ages 15 to 21, stand rapt along three ballet barres in the main studio of José Mateo Ballet Theatre's school in the Old Cambridge Baptist Church. They're watching Mateo, dressed in comfortable jeans and a grey knit shirt with elbow patches, demonstrate not the position but the *essence* of a *cambré*, or upper body arch.

"After you turn the head and hand, both things go like a blade of grass," he says gently, his raised arm and sternum lifting toward the vaulted ceiling, his back arcing in response. "Like everything that comes from the soil, it's a little bit more subtle as it goes up."



**Actors' Shakespeare Project Makes 'Much Ado' About Gender Fluidity**

The ARTery Apr 17, 2018

**Pushing Aside Political Frustrations, Christopher Moore Mined Humor For Pulp 1940s Universe Of 'Noir'**

The ARTery Apr 17, 2018

The lesson captures the aesthetics that drive Mateo's choreography, the pedagogy that shapes his organization's school, and the spirit behind Dance for World Community (DWC), a set of community programs he launched in 2008, that aims, he says, "to reposition the role of dance, in all its forms, in the Greater Boston area."

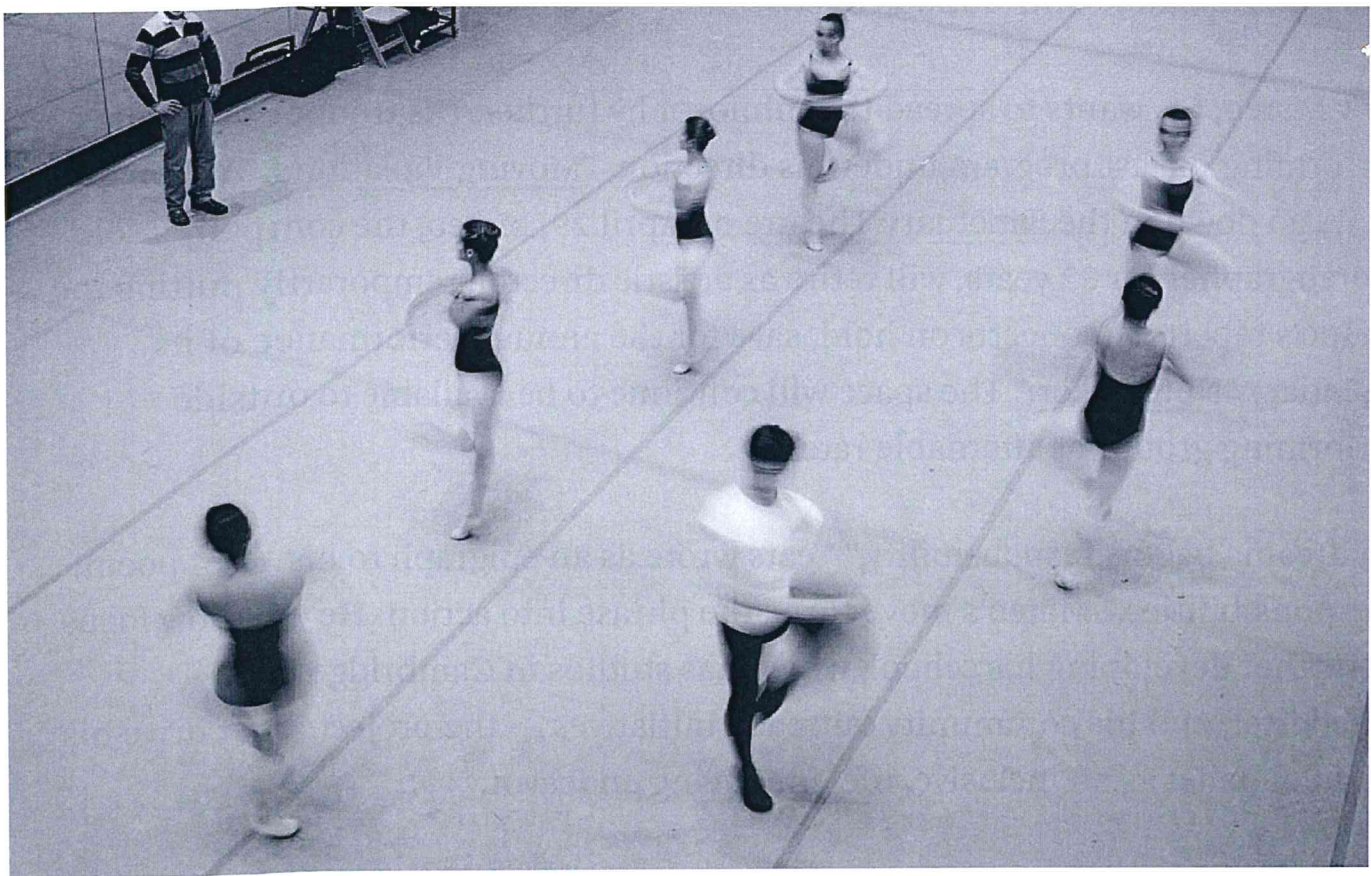
To José Mateo, ballet is a life force — for everyone, regardless of body type, age, background or level of proficiency. It's an artform, yes, but also so much more. He believes it improves lifelong physical and emotional health, sharpens critical-

Now Mateo, 66, wants to spread that philosophy further. His troupe is currently performing its last program under his direction, "Moving Violations." When the lights go down in the Sanctuary Theatre on April 29, Mateo, the company's sole choreographer for 32 years, will retire as artistic director, temporarily putting the troupe's repertory concerts on hold, save for the annual performance of its legendary "Nutcracker." The space will continue to be available to outside performing groups at affordable rates.

"In dreams begins responsibility," Yeats wrote as an epigraph to his 1914 poem, "Responsibilities." Mateo's move turns the phrase into action: He will now focus on further developing his school, which has studios in Cambridge and Dorchester, and his community outreach initiatives — the projects that drive his vision of ballet as an inclusive, life-enhancing endeavor.

Those in the dance community say it marks a seismic shift in the Boston ecosystem.

"Ballet Theatre is the only major ballet company in Boston other than the Boston Ballet," says Tony Williams, a former principal dancer with the Boston Ballet who has led the Tony Williams Dance Center, in Jamaica Plain, for 18 years and presented his own version of the seasonal tale, the "Urban Nutcracker," since 2001. "So there's going to be a big hole in the dance community and the city, particularly for a chamber-size troupe."



José Mateo teaches his students on a recent day in Cambridge. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

## Looking Forward

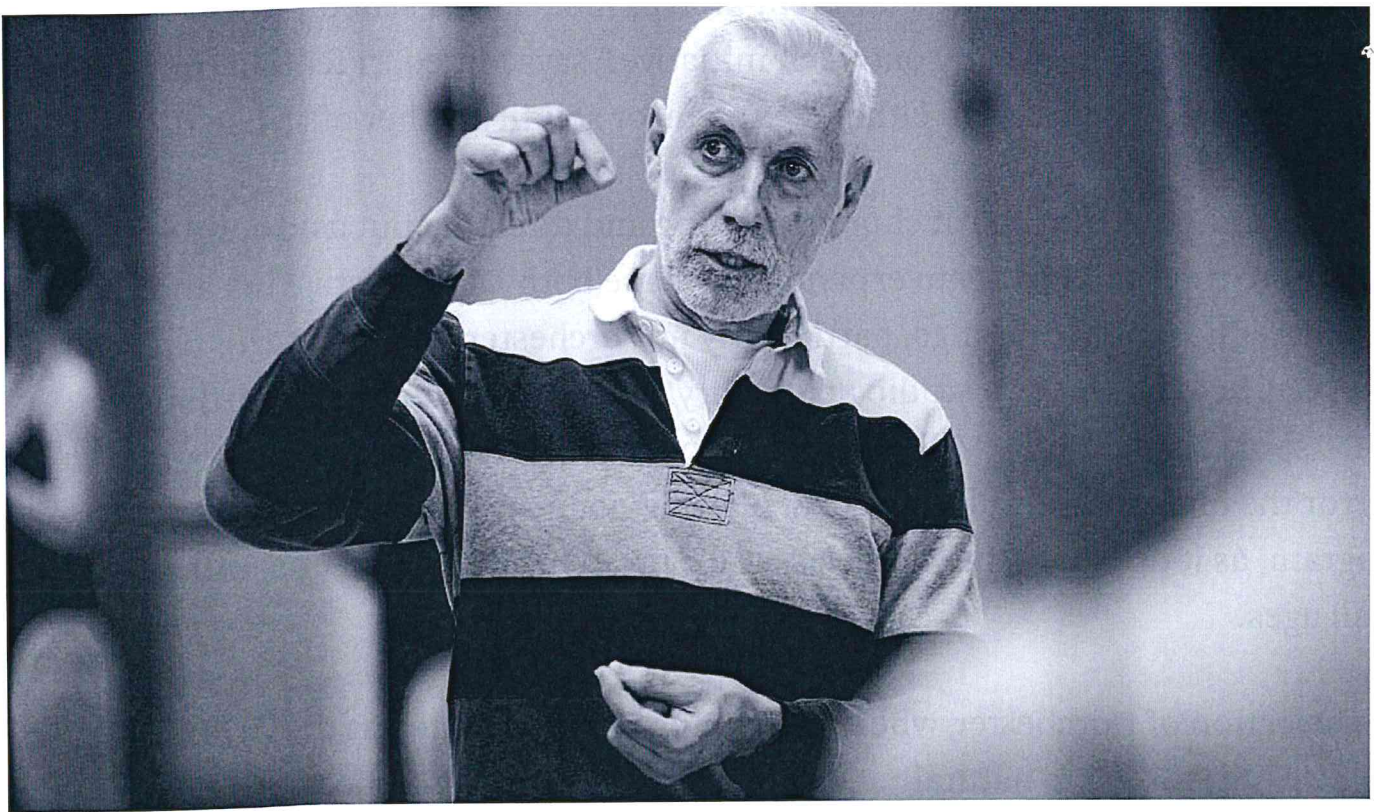
José Mateo Ballet Theatre (JMBT) has come to this place prepared. The transition has been in the works for more than five years. In 2013, the board of directors, under the leadership of Rick Shea, began exploring how the organization could preserve Mateo's legacy as an educator, choreographer and community builder, as well as pave the way for a smooth succession of leadership.

“An important part of the plan is to capture José's pedagogy, his instructional technique and approach, which is different from that of most ballet schools associated with a professional company,” says Shea, who met Mateo in 1969 when they were both undergraduates at Princeton University taking a dance class taught by now renowned modern dancer/choreographer Ze'eva Cohen. Also crucial is to find a way to catalog Mateo's choreographic works — a tall order, given the elusive nature of dance.

intention was always to start a different kind of model for a school, and a different kind of community outreach initiative,” says Mateo. “I feel as though I’ve never really been able to either complete, or solidify, either of those models.”

Now he can. With the jobs of choreographing and directing put aside, he will have more time and energy to expand and shape both DWC’s activities and the school’s educational offerings, particularly in Dorchester, which for the past two years has held classes in a studio at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church. According to JMBT spokesperson Julie Miller, Mateo plans to grow the Dorchester program to mirror the one in Cambridge by 2026, offering not just a Young Dancers’ Program, as it does now, but also classes for pre-professionals, teens and adults of all ages.

The selection of Dorchester, where the company first debuted at the Strand Theatre in 1987, came naturally. “Bringing ballet to new audiences has been a principal value of the school and the company from its inception,” says Mateo, as has programming for community outreach. “After 30 years you realize, ‘OK, there are certain populations that are going to be harder to reach than others, be it for cultural reasons, for geographic reasons, for economic or class reasons.’ ” Dorchester was one of them. So was Duxbury, a town that had no ballet until JMBT came there, and ran a program for 15 years.



José Mateo teaches ballet students at the Ballet Theatre in Cambridge. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

DWC, for its part, has already brought the organization's outreach to a new level. "It uses the power of dance to strengthen and build communities and support networks among dance organizations and other nonprofits and community organizations," says Shea. In addition to yearlong efforts such as Sponsor a Child in the "Nutcracker" and the Community Ticket Access Program, DWC holds a free annual summer festival in Harvard Square that typically draws about 20,000 people, says Miller. This year's festival — celebrating DWC's 10th anniversary — will feature a smorgasbord of indoor and outdoor performances by some 90 diverse participants on five stages.

"Let's show dance in all its forms, and all its formats, and all its styles," says Mateo, describing the festival's reason for being. "So that dances that once were not considered performance dances — they might have been traditional national dances, for example — can be brought to the stage and shared. Then we can begin to see the real breadth of dance, and the way different forms have for so long engaged so many populations. Let's provide the spaces, the environment, where education can happen in a different way than it has."

WHICH BOSTON DANCE ALLIANCE NAMED JOSÉ OUT DR. MICHAEL SHAMMON DANCE  
Champion in 2012, it was a public recognition of his ongoing work as a company director and teacher,” says Debra Cash, executive director of Boston Dance Alliance, a nonprofit that supports local dance organizations. “I think Boston dance will look back at his legacy as an institution builder. With [managing director] Scott Fraser, José has been able to preserve and transform the space that became JMBT’s Sanctuary Theatre, envision the inclusive community-building activities of Dance for World Community and the work going forward of bringing generations of young people to dance.”

## A Different Kind Of Model

Mateo’s description of the impetus behind DWC is a far cry from the elitist attitude that characterizes much of the ballet world.

His model for the school follows suit. It calls for the technique, athleticism and musicality of classicism, but not of the one-size-fits-all sort that most American ballet schools have adopted from the European and Russian academies. The emphasis is on the “breadth, the range of expression, that is possible through this artform,” says Mateo. “That includes the diversity of human relationships that people can convey through movement, and that audiences can relate to. I’m focused a lot on the power of music as a conveyor of environments and worlds that are inhabited by human beings of different stripes and inclinations.”

Accomplishing that requires personalized teaching and encouraging the development of the whole person. That means asking, “What can *your* body do, in ballet?” he says. “What are your hips, your shoulders doing? How are you holding that head up? What is your spine subjecting itself to? And to begin to understand the person’s body, and begin to help them understand how they can take that very unique body, and apply it to learning the language of ballet.”



A pillar of the local dance community, José Mateo is stepping back from directing his troupe to spend more time on education and outreach initiatives. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

Patricia Chiang, 25, who has been with Mateo for 14 years, first in the Young Dancers' Program and now as a company member and teacher of children in the school, attests to the value of that humanistic approach. "José always instilled in me the value of achievement — but achievement across the board," says Chiang. "The fact that every student, no matter what their background, their body, their economic status, that every student deserves equal access to the same ballet education, which is not available to most people for financial or physical reasons.

"As a teacher, I have a very wide range of kids, and you never know what dance can mean to them. If you're only looking at, 'I want to produce the best dancers,' or, 'Who has the most flexible body?' you miss a lot. The power of dance and the feeling it can give kids is something that I think is underutilized especially in ballet because ballet historically has been so selective."

Unlike Chiang, Anita Walker, executive director of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, is not a dancer. But she, like so many others, has experienced the magic of Mateo's method.



she visit with her colleagues — the council does site visits to all the organizations it funds with operating support. “I’ll never forget when we first visited him in the studio in Cambridge at the church. Before I knew it, he had all of us at the barre doing *pliés*. It was such an amazing experience to do something that you only thought was for special people. We could dance. We were all special. That was a gift he gave all of us.”

---

*José Mateo Ballet Theatre performs "Moving Violations," a program of four pieces, including the premiere of "New Pasts," through April 29 at the Sanctuary Theatre in the Old Cambridge Baptist Church.*

## Related:

---

- Ballet, Flamenco, Hip Hop — Dance For World Community And Social Change
- In Jose Mateo's 'The Nutcracker,' Diversity Stands Out

---

+ **Join the discussion**



View comment(s)

## Arts And Culture In Your Inbox

Get reviews, previews and features from The ARTery delivered to your inbox weekly.

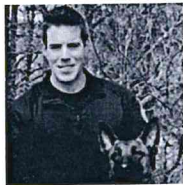


## 5 Things To Do This Weekend, From Women In Comedy Fest To Homegrown Hip-Hop

Plus see a new documentary at the Coolidge shows a more intimate side to pop star Grace Jones and visit your local record store Saturday for special edition vinyl.

The ARTery 1 hour ago

---

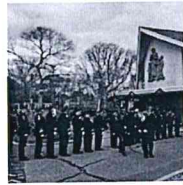


## Killing Of Yarmouth Police Officer Renews Calls For Death Penalty

The death of Sean Gannon, a Yarmouth K-9 officer who was fatally shot while serving an arrest warrant, has again raised the issue in Massachusetts.

WBUR News 4 hours ago

---



## Thousands Attend Funeral For Yarmouth K-9 Officer Killed In Line Of Duty

Sean Gannon was fatally shot while serving a warrant in Barnstable last week. He was 32.

WBUR News 4 hours ago

---



## Report: State Troopers At Logan Got Vehicle Per Diems

Another previously hidden perk for Massachusetts State Police troopers has been revealed -- a \$40 per diem for troopers driving their own cars to Logan Airport.

WBUR News 5 hours ago

---



## Baker: Criminal Justice Reform Comes With A Price Tag

Implementing a massive criminal justice reform law signed last week will cost the state an estimated \$15 million this fiscal year and as much as \$40 million next year, according...

WBUR News 5 hours ago

---

## Massachusetts Remembers Barbara Bush

Across the country and New England, people are remembering Barbara Bush, the former first lady who died Tuesday at age 92.

WBUR News 02:11 7 hours ago

---



Advertisement

## 5 For Good: The power of dance helps Cambridge girl flourish

A scholarship to the Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre School helps student meet milestones



Updated: 7:37 PM EST Dec 28, 2017

**Erika Tarantal**   

Anchor/Reporter

**Cambridge, MASS** — A Cambridge-based ballet company is harnessing the power of dance and working to make the art form more inclusive. Jennifer Mancia credits a scholarship to the Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre with changing her 6-year-old daughter's life.

Olivia Dutra was born premature and because of that, her mother says she's had a number of challenges to overcome.





minted.

Advertisement

"She didn't speak until she was almost 3 years old. She did not walk until she was about 2 1/2," Mancia said.

Olivia is now a budding ballerina. She just finished performing as a mouse in the Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre's latest run of "The Nutcracker."

"You scurry instead of run," Olivia said, describing her role.

Olivia's mother said she's so grateful for the financial assistance from the ballet school.

"We couldn't be there if we weren't scholarship recipients," Mancia said. "That was huge for us, because we couldn't afford the therapies that Olivia needed."

Mancia said after just nine months of ballet, her daughter no longer needed therapy. She said dance has helped Olivia catch up with her peers developmentally and socially.

Jose Mateo, a professional dancer turned choreographer, said the power of ballet is multifaceted.

"For certain, it's fitness, it's an art form, it's a self-awareness discipline, and all of these things can be very healing," he said.

Mateo started his namesake ballet company more than three decades ago, committed to excellence and community outreach.

"Dance is something that belongs to everyone," Mateo said. "One of the things that our organization has worked hard to do is to provide access in a very inclusive way that invites and welcomes diversity."

Follow this story to get instant e-mail alerts from **WCVB** on the latest developments and related topics.

## Sponsored Content



June 17, 2018

### Take a Summer Vacation...From Grocery Shopping

It's time to tack back the hours lost in the grocery store.

By Wegmans



Advertisement

## 5 For Good: The power of dance helps Cambridge girl flourish

A scholarship to the Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre School helps student meet milestones



Updated: 7:37 PM EST Dec 28, 2017

**Erika Tarantal**   

Anchor/Reporter

**Cambridge, MASS** — A Cambridge-based ballet company is harnessing the power of dance and working to make the art form more inclusive. Jennifer Mancia credits a scholarship to the Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre with changing her 6-year-old daughter's life.

Olivia Dutra was born premature and because of that, her mother says she's had a number of challenges to overcome.

Entertainment & Life

---

## **Ballet review: Mateo's 'Nutcracker' is a whirl of whimsy**

**By Iris Fanger/For The Patriot Ledger**

Posted Dec 10, 2018 at 12:12 PM

Updated Dec 10, 2018 at 4:16 PM

Theatrical Christmas packages for Boston audiences come wrapped in various sizes, but sometimes smaller is satisfying because the gift is up close and personal. So it goes with the Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre production of "The Nutcracker," in its 31st season at the Cutler Majestic Theatre, just down the street from "The Grinch" and around the corner from Boston Ballet's production. The Mateo troupe moves to Dorchester's Strand Theatre on Dec. 14. Regardless of location, however, Mateo's version of the classic Christmas ballet offers a holiday stocking full of treats.

When "The Nutcracker" had its premiere in St. Petersburg in 1892, the reviews were decidedly mixed, giving the critics pause because so many children were in the cast. Back in the day in Russia, ballet was serious business and children not valued much on stage except as decoration. George Balanchine, the influential choreographer at New York City Ballet, appeared in "The Nutcracker" when he was a ballet student in Russia. Balanchine then mounted his own version of the work in the United States in 1954, spreading the tradition – including lots of children from his ballet school – throughout.

Mateo has followed Balanchine's lead, casting adorable children by the dozens in his ballet. They come dressed in every manner of character and costume: furry, tiny mice, party children in their holiday best Victorian-era garb. The rosy-cheeked soldiers march in unison to protect Clara from the creatures of the night.





And that's not to mention the reindeer pulling the sleigh in the Snow Scene and the Cherubs, glowing candles in hand, welcoming Clara to the second act Kingdom of the Sweets. More than 200 children have been cast in the show, chosen in open auditions that welcome students from other schools as well as Mateo's own ballet classes.

Clara is the heroine of the story, leaving home and family to travel into a fantasy of new experiences, as if rehearsing the journey every young girl must take to become an adult. At this past Saturday's matinee, Alexandra Kellie, 14, of Arlington, danced the role on pointe. She was graceful and accomplished as she polished off stretched-out arabesques in lovely line from her body and circles of linked turns. (The role of Clara will be rotated throughout the run by Alexandra, Kennedy Luce-Burke, 13, of Winchester and Delia Wada-Gill, 17, from Lexington).

Mateo, who disbanded his company last spring, has put together a troupe of adult performers, led by a number of his longtime dancers to produce his annual "Nutcracker," among them Angie DeWolf and Spencer Doru Keith, as Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier. DeWolf is a strong ballet technician, secure in her landings and fearless in the high-on-his-shoulder lifts by Keith. The elegant and assured Madeleine Bonn led the Waltz of the Flowers but did not manage a smile until her bows at the end. Newly retired Boston Ballet soloist, Sabi Varga, (from Braintree) was a strong addition to the men, appearing as a caring father in the party scene, then quickly changing into white top and tights as a partner in the Snow Scene. Newcomer, Sabrina Appleby, gave Columbine, the dancing doll, an attitude and a sprightly personality when she tumbled from the oversized gift box to perform.

Jackson Jirard delivered the stand-out performance on Saturday afternoon as the Nutcracker Prince, a stiff doll at first then making us believe he turned into a human being by his gestures of feeling the blood coursing through his arms, legs and heart. Jim Banta was the somewhat sardonic but loving Drosselmeyer, story-teller in chief. Joe Hill as Mother Ginger, carefully and precariously balanced on stilts while the 12 child-clowns burst out from beneath his/her huge skirt.

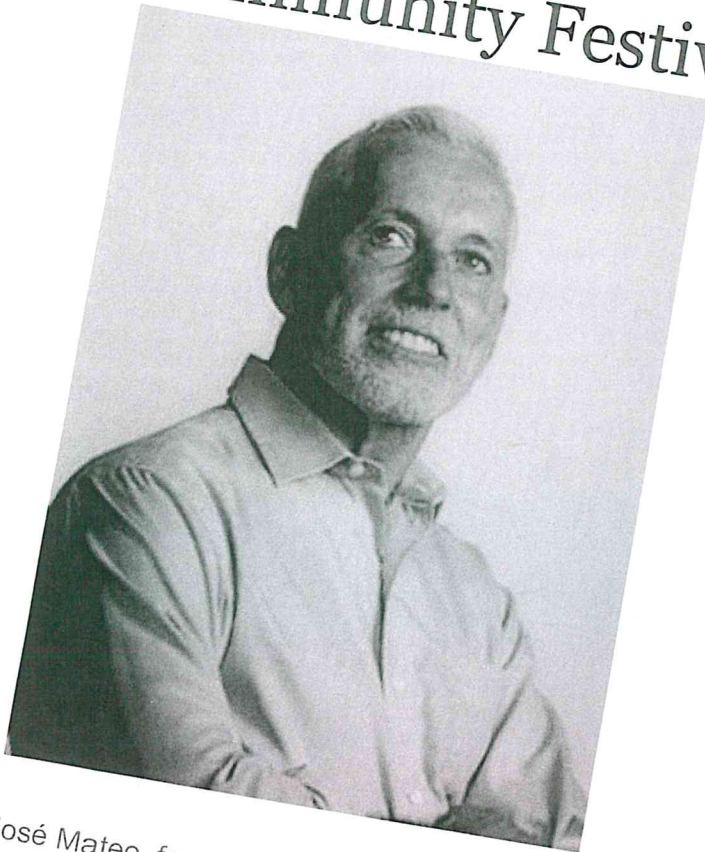
As always, Mateo's choreography excelled for the corps de ballet, especially in the snow scene, while the troupe danced exultantly through the falling flakes. Although the beloved score by Pyotr Tchaikovsky accompanies the ballet on tape, the entire company of professional dancers and enthusiastic children listened carefully to the rhythms and melodies that shaped the performance to the finale when Clara waved goodbye to her newfound friends.



A trio of local girls dance in Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre's 'Nutcracker': Vivienne Serafini of Hingham; Tess Sabia of Humarock; and Sydney Francis of Milton.



# Community and Social Justice is the Main Act at the Dance for World Community Festival



José Mateo, founder of the Dance for World Community Festival. By Courtesy of Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre

By Katia O. Soares dos Santos, Contributing Writer  
Yesterday

The day before the 14th annual Dance for World Festival, which took place on Sept. 25 in Harvard Square, José Mateo, founder of the José Mateo Ballet Theatre, took a moment to reflect on what he hoped attendees would get out of the event. Mateo always strove to encourage diversity and equality, values he believes originate from – but are not unique to – Cuban culture.



“Certainly in performance dance we expect the entire gamut of the human emotional experience,” he said. “But in terms of dance, social dance, and festival dance, in a community like this, the overriding sense of joy is the expectation.”

---

Joy was most certainly ubiquitous at Dance for World with its mosaic of performances, dance classes, food vendors, and small businesses. Despite its celebratory nature, a backdrop of social justice instilled a graver sense of shared struggle and responsibility. Though Mateo always sought to explore the intersection between performance and activism, this year it was impossible to consider the diversity of cultures at the festival without simultaneously evaluating the threats to diversity highlighted this past year. With the theme of re-emergence, visitors were forced to confront the conflict between joy at reopening and the pressing issues at hand.

Dancer Hale ‘Pinar’ Zengingouf was thrilled at the chance to celebrate her culture in front of an audience for the first time since the pandemic.

“Being on stage is such a great feeling...it brings everyone together. So I love it,” Zengingouf said. “Music and dance, they all bring people together, even if they have different backgrounds, different cultures, and when they feel the music, it just infuses you.”

Her pride in her culture is subverted by the considerable challenges she faces as an immigrant to the United States. She often feels as though she is subjected to unequal treatment on the basis of her immigrant status.

A few other individuals were in attendance at the Dance for World Festival on behalf of the Spare Change newspaper, a newspaper aiming to alleviate homelessness through advocacy and employment.

Despite the many voices given a platform through the Dance for the World Festival, Samuel Weems notes a huge segment of society that is composed of the





homeless population which goes overlooked. Fellow advocate Michael Wing added:

---

“It’s kind of the forgotten populace that’s always around the corner, but you never see anybody like that who’s trying to fight it. And that needs to change.”

ADVERTISEMENT

Representing traditional Hawaiian hula culture, Nila Murugan has been craving the sense of community that is built through having events in person. She said, “I can go to school again, which is helpful. In terms of dance, learning choreography, especially hula has been really difficult on Zoom. We have been able to work more as a team in person.”

In watching all the performances, Murugan sees a promising trend for the intersection between dance and social justice. “I hope that people will go to see more performances and especially the folk dancers because I think that folk dancing and traditional dancing are often overlooked from things like ballet, jazz, and tap,” Murugan said.

Dance for World shows the potential for dance to illuminate social issues. When discussing such complex problems, Mateo admits that there is not always an easy answer. Yet, he still has hope in the power of community to catalyze change.

“We do know that solutions really exist in cooperation,” he said.

Want to keep up with breaking news? Subscribe to our email newsletter.

TAGS





# The Boston Globe

## For José Mateo, a new direction in dance



KATHERINE TAYLOR FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

"We're trying to provide a ballet education as a means to enriching lives," choreographer José Mateo says of his passion for teaching dance.

By Karen Campbell | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT FEBRUARY 15, 2018

CAMBRIDGE — When José Mateo Ballet Theatre opens the three-ballet program "Stolen Hearts" on Feb. 23, the occasion will undoubtedly be a bit bittersweet for the 66-year-old Mateo. That's because it marks the beginning of an ending: After the company finishes its last program of the season April 29, Mateo, one of the area's most prolific and respected choreographers, is officially retiring as its artistic director.

Mateo is not sailing off into the sunset, however. Far from it. He's merely shifting gears and changing focus. While Mateo will direct the professional company in its annual "Nutcracker" next season, the troupe will cease repertory concerts after the close of this season until a new artistic director is found. In the meantime, the organization plans to provide affordable performance space for other area dance groups in Cambridge's Sanctuary Theatre, with an eye toward possibly presenting. Mateo himself may continue to choreograph for special projects, but he mostly will commit his energies toward strengthening his organization's outreach and educational programs.

Training dancers and teachers has been at the heart of Mateo's vision from the beginning of José Mateo Ballet Theatre 32 years ago, and the organization's after-school young dancers program, its summer dance program, and open adult classes bring in roughly \$700,000 annually. On a recent visit, dance students of varying ages, shapes, sizes, and backgrounds flooded into the school's two floors of dance studios in Harvard Square's Old Cambridge Baptist Church. Parents lounged outside in the hallways, reading or chatting amiably while young dancers attended classes, rehearsals, and auditions.

"It's a busy place," Mateo says with a trace of awe in his voice. "It continues to surprise me. On the one hand, there's been so much growth over the years. On the other hand, I'm always aware of how much work remains to be done. That need to come closer to a vision I've had for so long is part of what's driving this transition to the next phase."

The transition, for which Mateo says he is grateful and relieved, has been five years in the planning. It's been guided by a legacy and succession planning committee that Mateo says has been especially sensitive and generous in dealing with the typically tricky challenges of any founder-led organization.

Mateo's consistent message over the decades has been that dance matters, and he says his educational vision starts with the observation that most American ballet schools are modeled after European and Russian academies, where students are carefully selected according to specific criteria, especially body type. In contrast, Mateo maintains any body can be taught to move beautifully, efficiently, and with technical polish, without having to conform to a standardized size and shape.

"Yes, the knees have to straighten, the feet stretch, spines have to become supple, and coordination has to be brought to all that," he says. "Athleticism and musicality remain important. But it's a matter of recognizing that different people achieve that in different ways. And the ultimate goal is not necessarily to create professional dancers, though a surprising number of our students insist on going into dance. We're trying to provide a ballet education as a means to enriching lives."

He adds, "We have to be able to understand where students are coming from, their needs, talents, ways of learning, and that's highly individualized. When you do that successfully, you recognize the vast room there is for diversity and inclusion."

Watching Mateo teach a class of energetic 6- to 8-year-olds, one can see that philosophy in action. He is a gentle, soft-spoken disciplinarian who uses humor and Socratic questioning to engage his students.

Company dancer and faculty member Patricia Chiang has been affiliated with the organization since she was a child in the young dancers program, its sequence of classes for kids. She calls Mateo a brilliant teacher, a nurturing father-figure authority with a keen sense of fun.

"He has helped me see how important it is to instill a genuine joy for dancing in the children, all while also showing them that the hard work and discipline involved in ballet can be both fun and extremely rewarding," she says. "The school has truly been remarkable in its ability to provide high-level instruction and produce technical achievement across the board for all of the young dancers, no matter their age, race, body type, or economic background. This is rare in the ballet world."

In addition to the Cambridge school, José Mateo Ballet Theatre also has a satellite young dancers program at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Dorchester, which Mateo hopes to expand. Now in the middle of its third year, the program reaches populations that, Mateo says, "might not find their way to ballet education." For 15 years, the organization also had a school in Duxbury.

Jason Weeks, executive director of Cambridge Arts, the city's nonprofit arts council, calls Mateo a "cultural treasure" who not only has redefined ballet education but "developed pathways of support and engagement that allow everyone in the community to practice and celebrate dance." To that end, as Mateo redefines his role at the company, he also plans to concentrate on another pillar of the organization, Dance for World Community, a set of ongoing community programs culminating in an annual indoor/outdoor festival in Harvard Square. The largest dance event in the area, it draws nearly 20,000 people each year for performances and free introductory-level classes in a wide range of movement styles, according to José Mateo Ballet Theatre managing director Scott Fraser. The 10th anniversary Dance for World Community on June 9 will present more than 70 performance groups while fostering connections with social action organizations.

Mateo views Dance for World Community as a way to help reposition the role of dance. "A lot of dance organizations are isolationist, always in survival mode trying to grow a base of support," Mateo explains. "I'm trying to make dancers from different forms become aware of each other as part of a large community. If we unify, we can use that collective power as a real force to bring the broader community together, to impact issues that we care about, create other forms of convening and exchanging ideas."

However, Mateo's most immediate task is preparing six works — including a world premiere — for the company's two upcoming programs. After that, he plans on buckling down to sort through piles of notes and write.

"He plans to codify his teaching pedagogy to ensure ballet training remains humane and empowering for everybody who participates," says legacy committee chair Ellen Porter Honnet. "But as he moves away from producing new ballets every year and toward supporting other dance ventures, his goal remains the same — to have dance be a positive force for change in a way that people will feel valued and come together to make a difference."

Anita Walker, executive director of the Mass Cultural Council, adds, "Jose has opened the door to dance for thousands of people. He doesn't see dance as something just for the fortunate talented few, but as something that can build community and change lives."

#### **JOSÉ MATEO BALLET THEATRE**

"Stolen Hearts" program, Feb. 23-Mar. 18 at Sanctuary Theatre, Cambridge. \$45. 617-354-7467,  
[www.ballettheatre.org](http://www.ballettheatre.org)

*Karen Campbell can be reached at [karencampbell4@rcn.com](mailto:karencampbell4@rcn.com).*

# WEE

## Despite retirement, Mateo's New Classicism will live on

**Founder of Cambridge dance company to continue teaching programs and projects**

**By Keith Powers**  
Correspondent

At a climax in José Mateo's last ballet, "New Past," dancer Angie DeWolf exited slowly through a doorway at the back of the stage. The spotlight faded out.

You thought, "No, this can't be the end. That's much too sad."

Thankfully, that wasn't the end. Mateo's troupe returned to the stage for an energetic ensemble finale, and then the curtain finally fell. It was an appropriate comment on Mateo's retirement — an ending to one thing, but the continuation of others.

José Mateo Ballet Theatre, created 32 years ago by the Cuban-born dancer turned choreographer, will no longer present his original works. Mateo will continue with his other projects — his vast teaching programs in Cambridge and Dorchester, his seasonal "Nutcracker" performances, his enormous movement and social outreach event, Dance for World Community.

But his choreography — now numbering hundreds of concert dances in his New Classical style — will no longer be performed.

Mateo and his longtime life and artistic partner — José Mateo Ballet Theatre's managing director Scott Fraser — will hardly be retiring in

leisure to their Cape Ann home in Annisquam. The energy and creative enthusiasm that allowed them to support a troupe, establish schools, develop programs for nontraditional audiences, and build the massive one-day "Dance for World Community" into a life-affirming event, knitting together the arts and the social programs — those will never be "retired."

The choreography will be missed. It's hard to have a perspective on what Mateo really has accomplished. The broader dance world has two successful models: one is the small, constantly touring modern dance troupe; the other, major city ballet companies, like Boston Ballet.

Companies like JMBT, presenting new ballets by one choreographer, just don't exist anymore. Which makes this ending all the more historic, and this three-decade run of new work all the more important.

Mateo's New Classicism defies trends in choreography — and not just by working in ballet instead of modern dance.

See MATEO, B4



**Cuban-born Jose Mateo, founder of Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre, will continue with his other projects - his vast teaching programs in Cambridge and Dorchester, his seasonal "Nutcracker" performances, his enormous movement and social outreach event, Dance for World Community.**

[CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/MICHAEL BASU]

CAMBRIDGE CHRONICLE & TAB | Thursday, May 3, 2018 B9

## MATEO

From Page B2

Contemporary choreographers create dances with identifiable signatures: dance lovers easily recognize Cunningham, Lang, Ailey, Tharp and others, from signature gestures and movement. Mateo almost never did that.

But his style never looked like it was taken from a ballet textbook, either. He once said he thinks of his choreography as “incorporating 50 years of modern dance into ballet vocabulary.” Mateo’s ballets looked natural, organic and controlled — hardly ever virtuosic, demanding on the dancers or gymnastic. “More fluid, graceful, safer on the body,” he has said.

And then there’s the music. The appropriateness of Mateo’s movement has always been most visible in the appropriateness of his musical settings. His Bach feels like Bach, danced; so, too, his Schnittke, his Ginastera, his Schubert, his Górecki. Mateo’s music came from all eras, and his choreographic interpretations came from all directions.

That he chose to set his final premiere from young Bulgarian composer, Dobrinka Tabakova — whose “Suite in Old Style” sounded at times like Bach, at times like Nino Rota, at times like a gypsy fiddler had wandered into the room says remarkable things about looking toward the past, and anticipating the future.

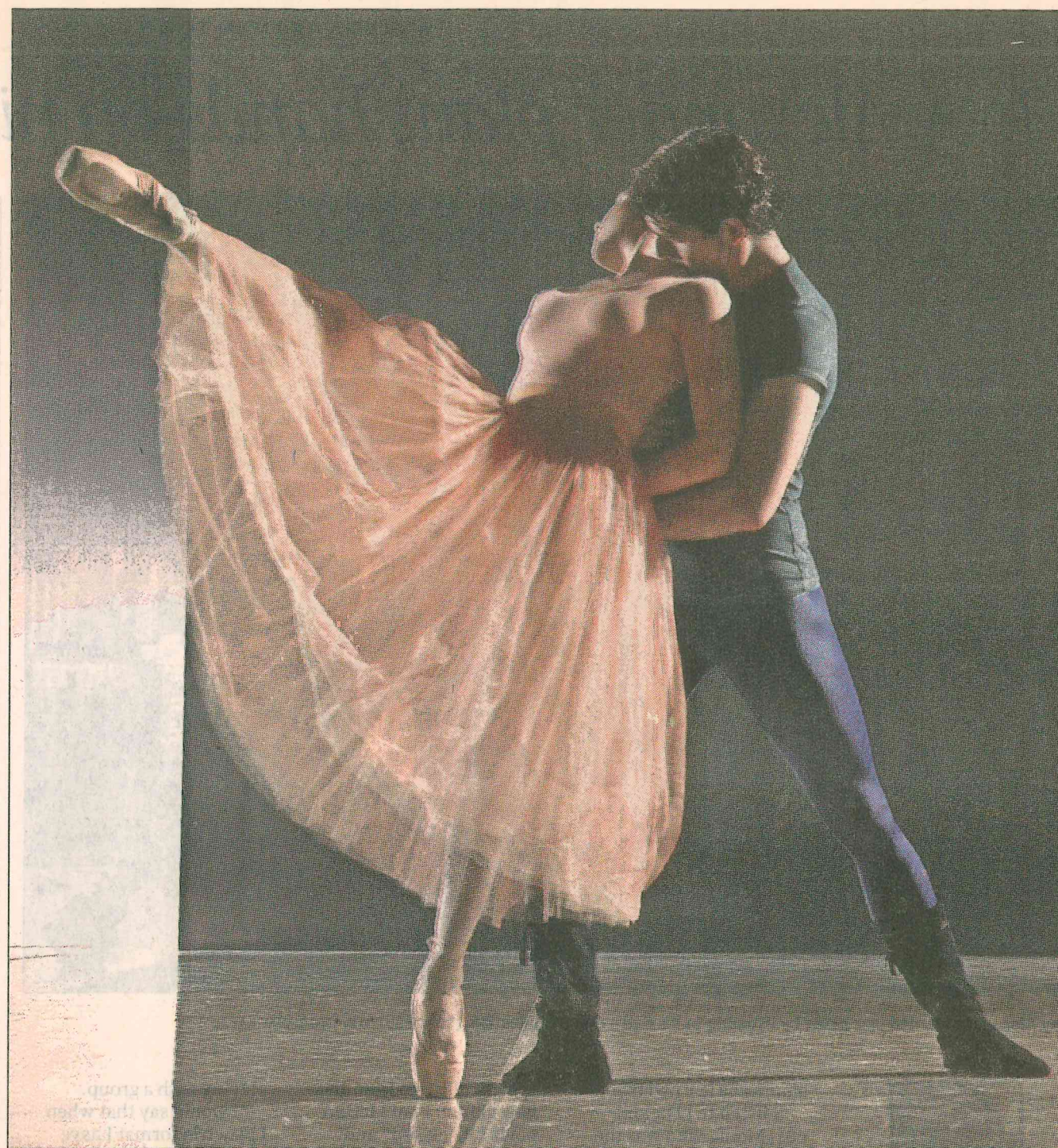
That appropriateness extended outward to the José

Ballet Theatre experience. His intention was to create an intimate moment — a close understanding of the music through dance, and a close understanding of the dancers for the audience. His Harvard Square Sanctuary Theatre — could there be a more appropriately named venue? — kept audiences on the stage level, at café tables, sitting close together, to experience the performances.

Dance can be inherently voyeuristic: a remote audience, peering intently at physically gifted, attractive dancers in athletic movement. Mateo’s dancers — far from the most physically talented troupe, but all invested artists — worked inches away from the audiences that admired them. This was never a “great artistry, lofty and imperious” experience; these were genuine artists, working in new ideas, guided by a special genius, bringing it all lovingly to appreciative viewers.

It is a sad event for those audiences, and for his dancers — most of whom were weeping onstage at the conclusion of Sunday’s final performance — that the three-decade glory of new choreography has come to an end. Dancers and audiences who have experienced 32 years of José Mateo’s work, and those who will continue to experience his egoless efforts as a socially concerned artist, can try to find an appreciation that transcends that sadness.

*Keith Powers covers music and the arts for GateHouse Media and WBUR’s ARTery. Follow him @PowersKeith; email to keithmichael-powers@gmail.com.*



Companies like Jose Mateo Ballet Theatre, presenting new ballets by one choreographer, just don't exist anymore. Which makes this ending all the more historic, and this three-decade run of new work all the more important.

[CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/GARY SLOAN]

# Mateo's mysteriously intriguing 'Arrangements'

By Jeffrey Gantz  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**C**AMBRIDGE — What's in a title? José Mateo Ballet Theatre is opening its 2012-13 season with "Mysterious Arrangements." Mateo in his program note says the phrase refers "to the intriguing, ever-changing choreographic positionings of the performers," as well as to "the complex relationships that the dancers' physical interactions describe." He could, of course, be talking about any choreography, from Merce Cunningham to George Balanchine. At the Sanctuary Theatre Sunday afternoon, Mateo ran closer to Balanchine, in three works that ranged from mysterious to mystifying.

One performance aspect in which Mateo keeps you off balance is costuming. In the opening piece, his 2005 "Time Beyond Time," most of the women wear gray or mauve leotards, but two of them have red leotards of a different cut, and it's not because they're featured dancers. And whereas the men's costume is basic black, the lead man sports brown bicycle shorts.

"Time Beyond Time" is set to movements 6, 5, 7, and 8 of Olivier Messiaen's "Quatuor pour la fin du temps" ("Quartet for the End of Time"), which premiered in a German prisoner of war camp in 1941. Messiaen took as his inspiration the passage from Revelation in which an angel announces the end of time. Mateo seems to have in mind a couple from different eras who try to connect with each other. They emerge from a first section in which the women, whose numbers dominate, echo some of the spiky movement of Balanchine's "Four Temperaments." Sunday the couple were Madeleine Bonn and Jacob Louis Hoover. In the second section, he kept turning her on pointe, in front attitude, in back, and there were many well-executed upside-down lifts. She strode away from him; he looked yearningly after her, then exited; she came back too late.



From left: Amanda Kostreva, Sybil Geddes, and Emma Ward in José Mateo Ballet Theatre's "Taking Turns," a Mateo work premiering this season at the Sanctuary Theatre.

At the outset of the slow final section, Bonn walked enigmatically through eight women lying on the floor; eventually one of the two women in red rose and

held her hand to Bonn's cheek. The section resolved into another duet for Bonn and Hoover, with more lifts. Even when at last they embraced, they contin-

ued to turn, time after time. At the end, she fell to the floor in his arms — but does time have an end?

"Dancers' Overture" (2003) is

DANCE REVIEW

**MYSTERIOUS ARRANGEMENTS**  
Choreography by José Mateo.

Lighting: Stoney Cook.  
Presented by José Mateo Ballet Theatre.  
At: Sanctuary Theatre, Cambridge, through Oct. 28.  
Tickets: \$40. 617-354-7467, www.ballettheatre.org

an eight-minute work set to the Overture from Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 2. Here the women wear black leotards and the men gray unitards. Bonn and Mark Kehlet Schou were the soloists, but the star of the piece is Mateo's patterning, which illuminates Bach's writing rather than simply reflecting it. In the faster fugal central section, one of the men made reference to August Bournonville in his port de bras; when the slow section returned, the procession of women might have been part of a Greek frieze.

The premiere on the bill, Mateo's "Taking Turns," is set to Philip Glass's String Quartet No. 4 (1989), which was commissioned in memory of an artist, Brian Buczak, who died of AIDS. "Taking Turns" begins with a man being dragged out by two other men and ends with one of the solo women — Elisabeth Scherer at Sunday's performance — laying a bouquet of white chrysanthemums on the floor. Most eye-catching was the second movement, which begins with three women momentarily positioning themselves like the Graces in Botticelli's "Primavera" before a man comes on and dances with the central one. Sunday the couple were Spencer Doru Keith and Sybil Geddes, man and goddess. She eluded him, pushed him to the floor; then the other two women returned and the trio circled him in a fading light as the movement ended. A mysterious arrangement indeed.

Jeffrey Gantz can be reached at jeffreymgantz@gmail.com.