

# Dancing the night away

**'Dance Saturdays' series reflects diversity of the artistic community**

**By Keith Powers**  
Correspondent



**There will be traditional Greek dance by the Boston Lykeion Ellinidon on April 13. [WICKED LOCAL FILE PHOTO/JOHN HURLEY]**

Dance for World Community has brought together more than 10,000 members from Boston's dance and social services network together every June for more than a decade.

Now you can join them every Saturday.

DWC's annual June festival, organized by José Mateo's Ballet Theatre, has become a mainstay event in the Cambridge community for dancers and their audience, as well

as for the community service organizations that are woven into the dance community.

DWC has grown to include more than 70 local dance groups, and dozens of social service organizations like the Homeless Empowerment Project, Big Brothers Big Sisters and Girl Up enlivening all of Harvard Square with performances and social outreach presentations.

Now Mateo's Ballet Theatre will bring one of these dance groups each week to Harvard Square's Sanctuary Theatre.

Beginning March 16, Dance Saturdays will spotlight a variety of dance styles, from classical Indian dance to

salsa, modern and flamenco.

"When we started Dance for World Community," Mateo says, "we thought we bringing together Boston's dance community. It turns out to be many different communities."

The Saturday series begins this weekend with RASA. Led by dance guru Sudha Chandra Sekhar, and including her Hindu Temple Rhythms, the Vidyanjali Dancers, Shekhar Shasri and others, RASA will explore traditional Indian dance and art.

The breadth of the Saturday series reflects the sweep of Boston's dance community.

**See DANCE, B2**



A scene from "América," the opening night film at the Global Film Festival of Boston.  
[CONTRIBUTED PHOTO]

## FILMS

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Polanco and César Alejandro Jaimes, takes us to a high desert where a young indigenous Wayuu woman "exhumes her cousin's remains in order to meet her for the last time. Through a sensory journey this ritual leads her to confront death and blend the world of the dreams with the world of the living," according to

a press release. The film recently had its North American premiere at the Sundance Film Festival.

Although the title of a documentary feature film being shown Sunday, "My Father Is My Mother's Brother," directed by Vadym Ilkov, sounds like something straight out "Game of Thrones," it's actually a touching portrait of a family: a young underground artist who takes care of his niece as his sister's mental health declines.

Also being shown

Sunday, "The Disappearance of My Mother," a 2019 Italian documentary directed by Beniamino Barrese, makes its Massachusetts premiere at the film festival. The director's mother, Benedetta Barzini, once a well-known model who uncovered the industry's dark secrets, is now in her 70s and tells her family she intends to totally retreat from the material world. Her son uses the camera to preserve his mother's story and the film becomes a collaborative project between the two.

### Dance Saturdays at the Sanctuary

**WHERE:** Sanctuary Theatre, 400 Harvard St., Cambridge

**WHEN:** Saturdays, March 16-May 25

**TICKETS:** \$25-\$125

**INFO:** 617-354-7467; ballettheatre.org

### Dance Saturdays at a Glance

**March 16:** Classical Indian Dance (Anandini Sekhar)

**March 23:** Traditional Japanese Dance (Michiko Kurata)

**March 30:** Hip hop (The Wondertwins)

**April 6:** Salsa (Salsa Y Control)

**April 13:** Traditional Greek Dance (Boston Lykeion Ellinidon)

**April 27:** Tap (Ian Berg's Subject:Matter)

**May 4:** Flamenco (Yosi Karahashi)

**May 11:** Contemporary Dance Theatre (Lorraine Chapman The Company)

**May 18:** Ballet (José Mateo Ballet Theatre's YouthWorks and faculty)

**May 25:** West African Dance (Sory and Marianne Harkless Benkadi)

## 'HAUNTED'

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credit, will soon be leaving Lowell to take over the Arizona Theatre Company.

Daniels and Peña agreed that adapting Kerouac's flowing prose for the stage was crucial to moving the narrative along while exciting the audience at key moments with his lyricism.

"What makes for a great novel isn't necessarily what makes a great stage play," said Daniels. "My challenge was how to make Kerouac's poetry active for the theater. I hope we've done a great job."

Peña agreed on the importance of "honoring Kerouac's original text" while shaping his language to the dramatic demands of the stage.

"So you have to rearrange, cut and move things around to find ways to activate the audience's imagination," he said.

The co-directors also agreed Peter Martin's struggle to reconcile his conflicted feelings toward his bigoted father who railed against immigrants made Kerouac's 75-year-old story especially relevant to the world outside the theater.

"Can you learn to love somebody who's a racist?"



Sean Daniels, artistic director of Merrimack Repertory Theatre, co-directs "The Haunted Life."  
[CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/MRT]

Daniels asked. "In 2019 we're still dealing with what Kerouac was dealing with in 1942."

MRT executive director Bonnie J. Butkas oversaw production of the two-act play set in Lowell. The cast includes Vichet Chum, Joel Colodner, Tina Fabrique, Caroline Neff and Raviv Ullman as Kerouac's doppelganger Peter Martin, later the protagonist of his first published novel, "The Town and the City."

An actor since adolescence, Ullman said he was struck by Kerouac's "universality" and the "amazing ways" each



Actor Raviv Ullman says he was struck by Jack Kerouac's

## DANCE

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The Wondertwins bring hip-hop to the Sanctuary March 30. Salsa Y Control performs April 6, Boston Lykeion Ellinidon's dance troupe presents traditional Greek dance April 13, tap fills the Sanctuary with choreographer Ian Berg's Subject:Matter on April 27, and Yosi Karahashi offers a glimpse into Boston's vast flamenco community on May 4. Lorraine Chapman The Company will present modern dance on May 11.

The series brings Mateo's Sanctuary Theatre back to life, after he ended his repertory programs last year. Mateo will return his own neo-classical ballet as well on this series, with a program by his YouthWorks troupe and faculty members on May 18.

The series ends the following weekend with Sory and Marianne Harkless Benkadi's West African Drum and Dance troupe.

Keith Powers covers music and the arts for GateHouse Media and WBUR's ARTery. Follow @Power-sKeith; email to keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com.

SATURDAY

**SATURDAY, MARCH 30**  
**10am - 3pm**  
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EVENTS SCHEDULE		
<b>Main Stage</b>	<b>Outdoor Touch a Truck Zone</b> sponsored by New Hampshire Motor Speedway	<b>baystateparent Fun Zone</b>
10:30 - 10:50 - Toe Jam Puppet Band 11:00 - 11:30 - Princess Storytime 11:40 - 12:10 - Cosmic Kelly - Spectacular Science Show 12:20 - 12:50 - Princess Sing-a-long & Dancing 1:00 - 1:20 - Toe Jam Puppet Band 1:30 - 3:00 - Ella Anderson Fan Photos	10:00 - 1:00 - Marlborough Fire Department • Marlborough Police Department • Worcester County Sheriff Command Vehicle 10:00 - 3:00 - Dorenzo Towing & Recovery • New Hampshire Motor Speedway • Xfinity	10:00 - 11:00 - Easter Bunny Photos 10:00 - 3:00 - Balloon Art and Face Painting by Happy Face Painting & Party Art • Caricatures by Partoons • Hourly Prize Drawings

Meet Wally from the Red Sox from 11:00 - 12:00 | Lucky the Leprechaun from the Boston Celtics (time TBA)  
 Paws the official mascot of the Pawtucket Red Sox 11:00 - 12:00 | Meet the members of the 501st New England Garrison  
 Run the Ultimate Obstacles' Kids Course | And Lots More!

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**SPECIAL GUEST WALLY FROM THE RED SOX**  
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generation found ideas in his novels and poetry that spoke to them.

Born in Israel and raised in the U.S., he has performed in television, movies and on stage and starred in the popular TV series "Phil of the Future."

Interpreting the role of Peter Martin, Ullman said he was trying "to honor the times when it was written" while addressing "profoundly relevant" current issues like the anti-immigrant bigotry of his character's father.

"It's easy to dive into Kerouac's work because it's so honest. And it's hard not to honestly react to what his father is saying," he said. "Unfortunately, that's still relevant in our times."

Kerouac (1922-1969) has been a problematic muse in Lowell since skyrocketing to fame in 1957 with the publication of "On The Road" which celebrated a Beat Generation of seekers of "kicks" and sexual freedom.

Yet in recent decades Lowell has embraced its wayward son with an annual festival, a downtown commemorative park and at UMass/Lowell which established a Jack and Stella Kerouac Center for the Public Humanities and holds conferences and other Kerouac events.

The MRT has helped lead the way with prior productions of "Maggie Cassidy" based on Kerouac's novel of first love and "Beat Generation," his only full length play.

Lost by the 22-year-old Kerouac in unknown circumstances, the handwritten manuscript for "The Haunted Life" surfaced 58 years later at a 2002 Sotheby's auction.

In a Huffington Post article, Todd Tietchen, an associate professor of English at UMass/Lowell who teaches classes on Beat Generation literature,

"universality" and the "amazing ways" each generation found ideas in his novels and poetry that spoke to them.

[CONTRIBUTED PHOTO]



**Christopher Oscar Peña**  
 co-directs "The Haunted Life."  
 [CONTRIBUTED PHOTO]

**'The Haunted Life'**

**WHEN:** March 20-April 14  
**WHERE:** Merrimack Repertory Theatre, 50 East Merrimack Street, Lowell  
**TICKETS:** \$24-\$66  
**INFO:** 978-654-4678; [www.mrt.org](http://www.mrt.org)

explained he was asked by the Kerouac estate to edit "The Haunted Life and Other Writings" for publication, bringing it to the attention of Daniels.

Daniels then spent two years adapting the unfinished novella, which included authorial "plot points" that hinted at its author's intentions, for the stage in conjunction with Kerouac's literary estate, now headed by Jim Sampas, of Holliston.

While true to its author's spirit, Peña promised "The Haunted Life" is not "your grandfather's Kerouac."

Though the multi-ethnic cast wears period costumes, the play takes place in an "impressionistic" set that suggests an "exploded warehouse full of picture frames."

A first generation American born of Honduran immigrants, Peña said he wanted to cast

actors to reflect Lowell's evolving population and "remind people of today" when the anti-immigrant bias of Martin's father has found new voices.

"It sounds like the rhetoric of our president today," he said. "I want to paint a visual portrait of what America is today."

Peña said co-directing "The Haunted Life" was like bringing to light "a great primer on Kerouac on his way to becoming the Jack Kerouac who wrote 'On The Road.'"

A prolific playwright and a staff writer and actor for the TV series "Insecure," Peña added audience members don't need in-depth familiarity with Kerouac's novels to be moved by "The Haunted Life."

"The Kerouac legend happened after 'On The Road.' This (play) is a coming-of-age story of a kid trying to figure out what to do with his life," said Peña. "As a theater-maker, you hope to express something to every single person. I hope something lands on them as they're open to it."

For Ullman, recreating his character's journey of self-discovery on stage brings him closer to the author he admires while hopefully inspiring similar feelings in the audience.

He visited Kerouac's grave 10 years ago on the 40th anniversary of his death to honor the author whose writing "somehow speaks to every generation."

"Each play is a different journey that takes a lot from your own life changes," said Ullman. "Leaving the theater, I'd hope audience members felt we did Jack Kerouac justice and they see how relevant his work is to today."