



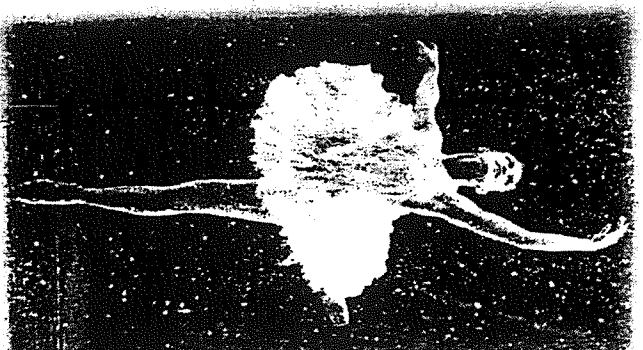
Ballet Theatre of Boston leads the charge of the

'Other Nutcrackers'

For years, Boston Ballet has touted its production of "The Nutcracker" as the most popular in the world, with an overall audience of more than 140,000 each season. But this hasn't stopped the proliferation of numerous "other Nutcrackers" around the area — from professional companies to those made up entirely of students from neighborhood dance studios.

For most companies, "The Nutcracker" is the cash cow that makes the rest of the season possible. "I think all ballet companies rely very heavily on 'The Nutcracker,'" said Jose Mateo, founder and artistic director of Ballet Theatre of Boston, which presents the second most-popular production of the ballet in the area. "We're usually holding our breath through the month of December, but we do make money on this ballet, and that allows us to get a jump start on the spring season."

While the Boston Ballet production is firmly ensconced at the Wang Theatre through Jan. 4, many of the other smaller companies create productions that tour, taking ballet to communities that have little ballet otherwise. Dance Prism, which studiously avoids



HOLIDAY TREATS: The Wang Theatre's "The Nutcracker" isn't the only act in town. The Ballet Theatre of Boston (choreographed by Jose Mateo, below), and the City Ballet Cooperative, left and bottom, are among the several 'other Nutcrackers' being produced this holiday season.

DANCE

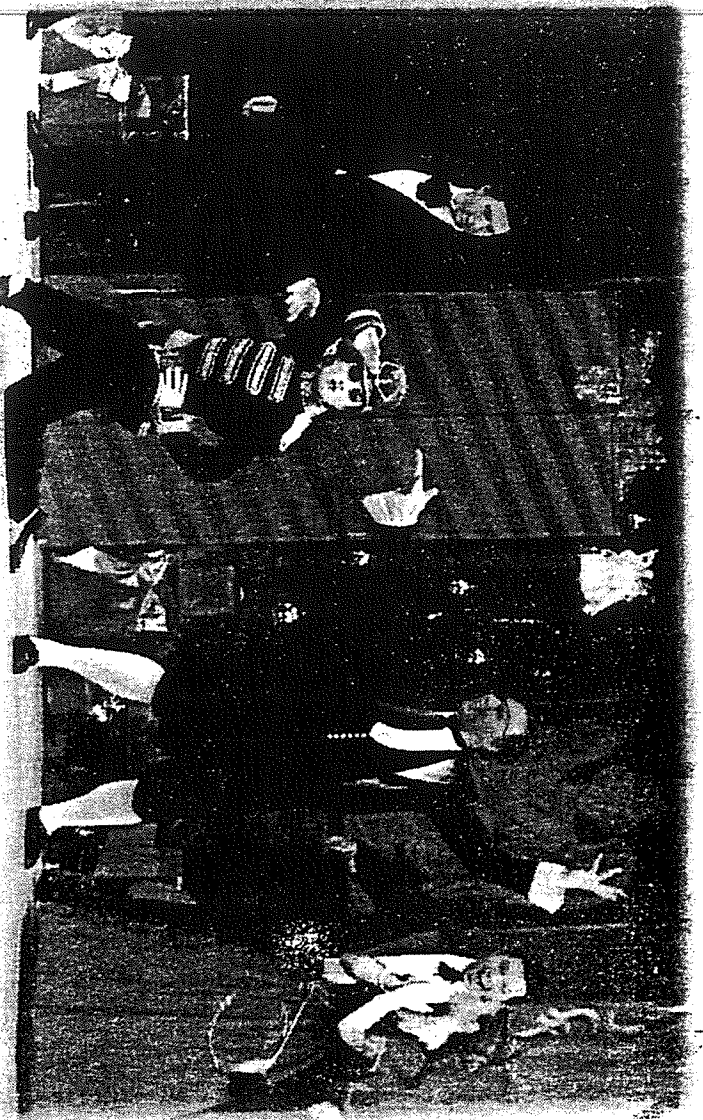
the busy metropolitan area, has 14 performances (two with live orchestra) scheduled of its 14th production in eight cities throughout New England. "The Nutcracker" helps us survive," co-director Mary Dennis said.

Ballet Theatre of Boston, which presents its 10th production at the Emerson Music Theatre Dec. 10-26, precedes its city stay with performances in Lowell and Worcester.

The semiprofessional Boston Dance Company presented its first full-length "Nutcracker" in Cambridge last weekend and performs this weekend at the Strand Theatre in Dorchester. (The Cambridge performance featured what may have been a first — an all African-American Silbermans family, with Cambridge City Councilor Ken Reeves standing in as Clara's father.)

Similarly, City Ballet Cooperative (formed two years ago from the old Chambers Ballet Company) performs in Cambridge this weekend with subsequent performances in Brockton (Dec. 20-





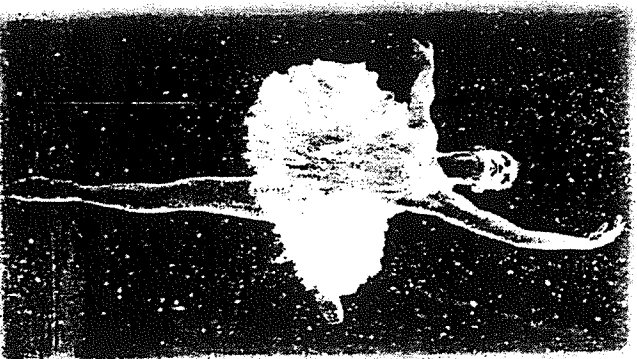
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The Boston Globe

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1997

Questionable collection

MFA pre-Columbian exhibit faces acquisition queries

By John Yemma and Walter V. Robinson
GLOBE STAFF

YAXHA, Guatemala - A thousand or more years ago in the jungles of central America, Mayan inhabitants of cities such as Yaxha buried their revered leaders within massive pyramids, adorning the bodies with precious jade and placing prized polychrome pottery beside them.

Starting tomorrow, the public can see fine Mayan jade, pottery and burial urns in a new permanent exhibition at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts - a collection that has provoked scorn among some archeologists, protests from government officials in Central America and ethical questions about the museum's acquisition policies.

Many of the pre-Columbian objects, a gift of

MFA trustee Landon T. Clay, came to Boston after having been looted from graves and illegally exported, according to Guatemalan officials and archeologists who specialize in Mayan objects.

"They are pages ripped out of the history book of our nation," Guatemala's vice minister of culture, Carlos Enrique Zea Flores, said recently as he showed a Globe reporter archeological sites in remote parts of northern Guatemala that have been targeted repeatedly by looters.

The Mayan artifacts are not the only controversial items in the exhibition. A companion gallery of ancient African art includes two terra cotta figures from the west African country of Mali loaned to the MFA by William E. Teel, a member of the museum's board of overseers. Archeologists say these

MFA, Page A28



PHOTO COURTESY OF MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS
Archeologists say this Mayan vase and other pieces in the collection may have been looted.



"I really enjoy the synthesis of music and motion," says Kay Onan, who took up ballet eight years ago at 40. "And I want to learn more."
GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / PAT GREENHOUSE

Novices find joy in late leap to ballet

By Anne E. Kornblut
GLOBE STAFF

Even as "The Nutcracker" makes its annual run this month, one of the city's most joyous ballerinas is remaining in the shadows.

Kay Onan, a dancer whose name has eluded the marquee at the Wang Theater for nearly a decade, is comfortable with her anonymity. At age 48, with just eight years of ballet experience, she admits she is probably better off

with her job as an administrator at Northeastern University than auditioning for the role of Sugar Plum Fairy.

Once a week, however, Onan slips into stardom.

Dressed in a black leotard, her pink ballet shoes strapped on, she stretches at the barre in a mirrored classroom at the Ballet Theatre of Boston.

Then she glides - sometimes more gracefully than others - toward what choreographer George Balanchine once called the "glories we

might attain as human beings."

"It started, for me, somewhere between curiosity and stupidity," laughed Onan, as she stretched her arm across a barre before class last Tuesday night.

"I just really enjoy the synthesis of music and motion," said Onan, who took up ballet at age 40. "And I want to learn more."

She is a member of a brave elite. In a city overrun by rollerbladers and gym-goers, Onan is among hundreds of mature adults who risk pub-

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A later leap into ballet study

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lic embarrassment to leap and twirl on the hardwood floors of nearly a dozen Boston ballet schools every month.

Few harbor illusions about their future careers in dance. But their collective enthusiasm — as indicated by long class waiting lists and increasingly crowded barre space — seems to be strong enough to outweigh the humiliation of wildly flung limbs or mid-pirouette collisions.

That much was clear Tuesday night of last week, when 15 intermediate students gathered in a second-floor classroom at the Boston Ballet Center for Dance Education.

They were an eclectic group: a real estate lawyer, a writer, a high-tech consultant, and a legal administrator. Most were women: ages ranged from 20s to 50s. They were, without question, all shapes and sizes.



DOLE SAW PHOTO/ART GALLERY

Jean Rossetti is among hundreds of mature adults falling on the hardwood floors of nearly a dozen Boston ballet schools every month.

What the group had in common — apart from stiff joints from sitting at their jobs all day — was an intensity of purpose, made obvious by numerous facial grimaces as they warmed up at the barre. As a pianist played from the corner of the room, the

class "piled" and "reheved" for nearly an hour, then they took to the floor. Touring across the room with sequences of arabesques and pirouettes, each seemed oblivious to their peers. They practiced movements in front of the mirror repeatedly, as intently as though it were a professional rehearsal. And unlike most of their beginner-level peers, the majority were able to touch their toes — and dance without looking at them.

There were occasional slips; few seemed to mind. And they laughed when, during one pirouette sequence, instructor Ern Sung yelped at a stray dancer: "Watch out!" "I guess on some level I still think I can grow up to be a ballerina," explained Joan Feinberg, 48, director of a Boston publishing house, as she stretched at the end of class. "I think it's more than exercise; it's the artform. Even as an adult, you need some sort of expression."

Whitney Allen, 27, expressed a more specific purpose: drama. She could do one at a time when she began taking classes again in April, after having abandoned it in college. "I can now do a double pirouette," Allen, who by day works in a Boston consulting firm, said proudly.

Late starters fill ballet classes

Continued from preceding page

know, if you come in here consistently, you can do that."

The athletic component to ballet has helped its upswing in popularity among adults, according to local administrators. Although some classes have little aerobic activity, particularly at the lowest levels, they offer intensive muscle strengthening, as well as toning and flexibility that some compare to yoga.

At the same time, several entry-level teachers have said they try to maintain a laid-back class atmosphere — eliminating the dictatorial spirit many adults knew during childhood ballet.

"You know my philosophy: eat and enjoy!" Sung told her class on Tuesday, giving popular advice for

the Thanksgiving holiday.

The exercise and the casual comfort, combined with the romantic fantasies traditionally associated with ballet, are beginning to make a difference on the rosters of a number of local schools, administrators said.

At the Boston Ballet, on Clarendon Street, in the South End, there are more than 100 names on the list for the 1998 adult beginner course. The new, 12-week class — which meets two times a week, at \$10 per class — filled up immediately during the fall 1997 session, according to Boston Ballet administrator Kelly Britz.

At the Ballet Theatre of Boston on Massachusetts Avenue, entry-level dance classes have seen a "definite influx lately," as the school has be-

gun advertising the health benefits of dance at local gyms, public relations director Julie Haven said.

And at the Dance Complex, on Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge, attendance in beginning levels of all dance classes — including salsa — has risen steadily over the last few years, said administrator Anna Zamarripa.

"Out of nowhere, we'll have an extremely large beginner class," she said. "They come from all over, pursuing exercise, pursuing creativity."

Could some be pursuing their childhood dreams?

"I don't know if someone starting out at 30 can become the prima ballerina of New York," Zamarripa laughed. "But that's not to say they can't try. A lot of people get a late start. A lot of people switch careers."

'Nutcracker' Spate: Boston's Two Ballets Go Toe to Mistletoe

* * *

It's No Competition, Says One,
Though Sales Have Fallen
As Sugar Plum Fairies Duel

By CYNTHIA THOMAS

Special to THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
Boston Ballet has developed a strategy for dealing with the "Nutcracker" that opened down the street from its own: Pretend it doesn't exist.

Since Ballet Theatre of Boston's production of the Nutcracker opened seven years ago, attendance has risen steadily. Meanwhile, the 34-year-old Boston Ballet, one of the top companies in the country, has seen its audience drop for the holiday extravaganza.

A lot is at stake. The Nutcracker — which traditionally features a growing Christmas tree, anywhere from dozens to hundreds of dancing children and a treacherous Tchaikovsky score — is the cash cow for American ballet companies, typically providing one-third to one-half of a company's annual budget, ballet officials say.

More people go to Boston Ballet's "Nutcracker" than to any other ballet in the country, including New York City Ballet's "Nutcracker." But while Boston Ballet sold about 141,000 tickets in 1992, the 100th anniversary of the Tchaikovsky ballet, last year it sold only about 114,000, a plunge of nearly 20%. And in the three most recent years, attendance is down 10%.

Meantime, Ballet Theatre's audience climbed 18% over the past three years to more than 23,000 — nowhere near enough to put Boston Ballet out of business, but seemingly enough to ruffle its tutus.

Outside of the ballet world, some people are confusing the two. Ballet Theatre dancers performing a Nutcracker excerpt at Faneuil Hall last month were introduced by Mayor Thomas Menino as members of the Boston Ballet, a common slip. A picture in December's Boston magazine of Boston Ballet dancers gave details for Ballet Theatre's performances underneath.

Boston Ballet General Manager David Brown admits to being tweaked when Ballet Theatre hung up a Nutcracker shingle: "We're not particularly thrilled about it, but I don't think it's the place of the leading ballet company to make comments about peers," he says. "While there may be room

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'Nutcracker' Duel Puts Two Ballets Toe to Mistletoe

Continued From Page NE1
for two Nutcrackers, we would've preferred they not be right down the street."

Yet he and other Boston Ballet officials insist that the other Nutcracker — being performed in a smaller theater by a younger company with fewer dancers and an annual budget that's only twice what Boston Ballet spends on Nutcracker advertising alone — is not forcing them to do things any differently.

If not, then what about the Boston Ballet radio ads in 1994 that featured Nutcracker tunes barked by dogs, quacked by ducks and gargled by human beings and warned: "Accept no imitations this holiday season. There is only one Nutcracker?"

"It was not aimed at them at all," says marketing director Rebecca Crawford, but rather at the myriad holiday productions consumers now have to choose from.

And the revamped \$1 million production with new scenery, costumes and special ef-

YEAR	BALLET THEATRE	BOSTON BALLET
1991	12,345	129,397
1992	15,271	141,370
1993	17,978	126,772
1994	19,006	125,733
1995	19,678	136,458
1996	23,266	113,595

Note: Ballet Theatre figures include complimentary tickets.
Source: The companies

fects unveiled in 1995? That was something Boston Ballet had been planning for a long time, says a spokeswoman.

Mr. Brown and other Boston Ballet officials say they've never seen the dancing sugar plum fairies down the block. (Ballet Theatre's artistic director, Jose Mateo, says he has never been to Boston Ballet's Nutcracker, either.)

Boston Ballet officials say what worries them most is the city's revived theater district. Their Nutcracker, at the 3,500-seat Wang Theatre, used to be the only holiday fare in the district. Last year it competed with "Rent" and "Master Class" in neighboring theaters. This year, "Stomp" and "Chicago" are playing within walking distance, and "Cats" is opening across the street Dec 16.

Even Disney's "Beauty and the Beast," which doesn't open until next summer, worries Boston Ballet because tickets went on sale at the same time and in the same theater as its own Nutcracker tickets. Buyers aren't looking at when they're going to the theater, Ms. Crawford says, but when

they're spending the money.

Boston Ballet isn't the only company across the country suffering a downturn in Nutcracker attendance because of competition from touring Broadway musicals and a burgeoning number of holiday shows. But Boston Ballet's production is the only major one that has to compete against another professional ballet's Nutcracker so close to home.

Ballet Theatre's numbers are tiny by comparison. Last year it took in \$241,855 from ticket sales and played to an audience of 23,266 (not all those seats were paid for, as some were special promotions). Boston Ballet's Nutcracker revenue was \$5.1 million, with the sale of 113,595 tickets.

Six years ago, when his company was six years old and after performing Nutcracker in other New England towns, Ballet Theatre's Mr. Mateo decided Boston could support another Nutcracker, at the 980-seat Emerson Majestic Theater.

Mr. Mateo calls his production a more serious ballet, one that even ballet fans — who tend to roll their eyes at the mention of Nutcracker — can enjoy.

"A common mistake is to treat Nutcracker as a shoo-in for a big audience and a throwaway in terms of what it can be artistically," he says. "It's not going to have the profundity of 'Othello,'" he adds, but it can be a cohesive story rather than a collection of dancing tidbits.

With prices ranging from \$9 to \$28, says Scott Fraser, Ballet Theatre's associate director, his company targets a different demographic from the Boston Ballet crowd, which pays \$12 to \$59 per ticket.

"We're going after a more diverse audience, a younger audience," says Mr. Fraser. "Our product is priced and designed for younger families."

Boston Ballet has a \$500,000 advertising budget for the Nutcracker, with one TV spot and two radio ads running on local media, as well as newspaper ads. Ballet Theatre relies mostly on news media, fliers and appearances at community events.

A Boston Ballet fact sheet quantifies the excess of its production, from the "one ton" of white confetti used as snow, to "an enormous dancing bear, an army of toy soldiers, 16 dancing snowflakes, 16 dancing flowers, 12 cherubs, a harp, four French horns, seven first violins, one tuba, a big brass gong, a brown-and-white bunny, four cuddly white lambs with little black noses, a heavenly children's choir and a small herd of white reindeer." It notes also that total attendance is "19 times the population of Nauru, the world's smallest country."

The Ballet Theatre fact sheet boasts that its Nutcracker discards "the pomp and excess of traditional elitist ballet" and offers affordable ticket prices.

At Ballet Theatre, any Nutcracker advertising works to its advantage. "Anything that gets the word out helps," says a spokeswoman.

But Boston Ballet's Mr. Brown begs to differ. "We regularly have people at our theater with tickets to the other production," he says. "Anything that creates frustration or confusion or a hassle for ticket buyers hurts us all."

Generously giving the intangible gift of dance

Actress Victoria Rowell sponsors scholarship for Ballet Theatre of Boston student

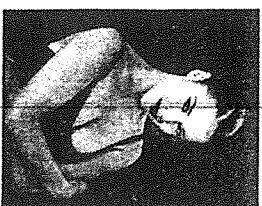
By Christie Taylor
CNC Arts Writer

Think of the holidays and think of gifts: huge boxes wrapped in shiny paper with oversized bows and boxes of candy and homemade goodies packaged with care. At Ballet Theatre of Boston, more than 200 children are rehearsing nonstop so that they may

DANCE

recount for audiences one of the most well-known scenes of holiday gift giving — the party scene of "The Nutcracker." There's also a gift being passed around the Ballet Theatre of Boston studios, but it's not a tangible one: It's the gift of dance.

As Jose Mateo, director of the company and choreographer of this original production, rehearses the party children for their roles, which they will perform at the Emerson Majestic Theatre from Dec. 10-28, he notes one dancer who has overcome obstacles that the other children have not faced.



Victoria Rowell, star of "The Young and the Restless."

The dancer's name is Shirley, who's a 12-year-old foster child on scholarship at Ballet Theatre through the Rowell Foster Children's Positive Plan. Shirley attends class four days per week and rehearses on Saturdays because of a program started by Victoria Rowell, a former ballet dancer and television star ("Diagnosis Murder." "The Young and the

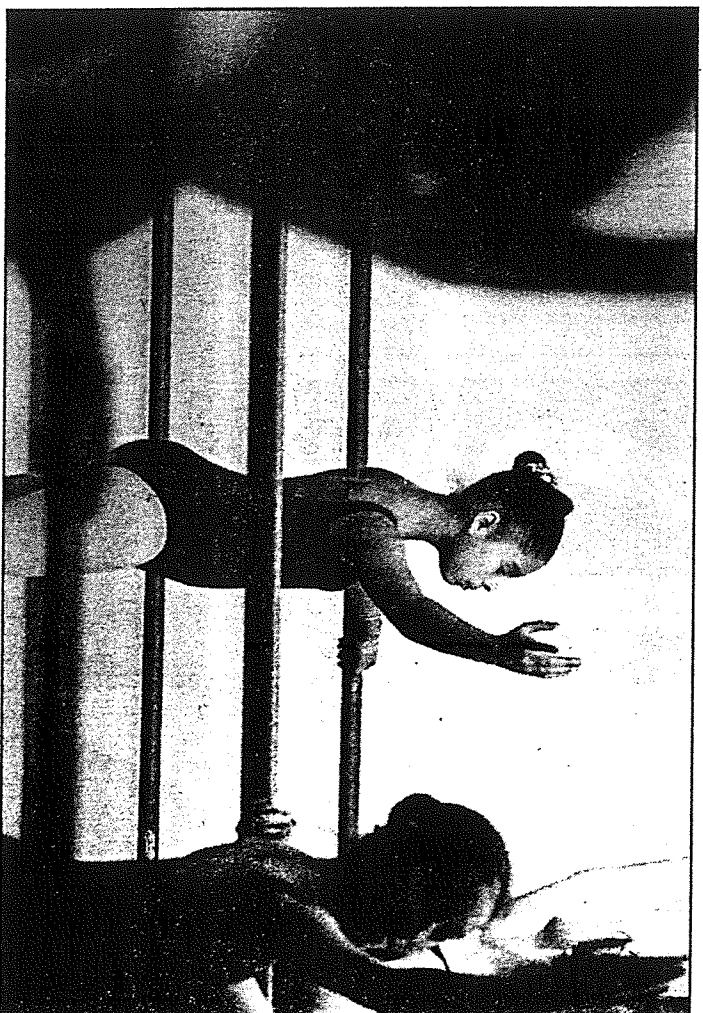
Restless") who started the fund to give scholarships to about 10 students a year to study ballet, basketball or golf.

"It's difficult for children like Shirley because they are in a nebulous labyrinth," explains Rowell, speaking from her dressing room on the "Diagnosis Murder" set. "Even though perhaps in the back of foster children's minds they're not sure where they're going to go next — and that's why I call it the nebulous labyrinth — they have hope. And with the ballet I know that it offers these children this haven from all of the chaos. It is their temple. I always felt that way when I went to ballet," says Rowell, also a foster child, who began ballet lessons at the Cambridge School of Ballet years ago.

"I still have the gift of dance in my spirit," she says. And that's what she wants to pass along. "A lot of our children today, unfortunately through typed advertising, think that the Mercedes and the Rolex and the fancy pair of NBA sneakers are the end all-be all. But those things aren't the end all-be all. With dance you cannot lie, you really have to work very hard for that technique. So that in itself is a very good lesson for children."

Mateo's philosophy of teaching meshes with Rowell's, which is part of why Rowell chose Ballet Theatre as a site for scholarship recipients. Rowell and Mateo also danced together at Ballet Hispanico in New York.

"Anyone will benefit from the study of ballet," says Mateo. "That benefit really is not just learning how to execute steps. The benefits really transfer into most anything the children do, and so we figure even if their circumstances do not



Shirley's scholarship to Ballet Theatre of Boston is funded by the Rowell Foster Children's Positive Plan.

permit them to continue ballet long term, that they will have gained something very beneficial to their lives in general."

Shirley's favorite aspect of ballet is the movement. "It's fun," she says. "I also like the acting and being onstage." She says the difficulties for her lie in going to all the rehearsals and learning the steps, but her attendance is fine and she's keeping up with her schoolwork.

"She's a very determined child who has very intelligently responded to the demands of ballet training," says Mateo. "Her discipline, her manner, her behavior and her dedication is apparent at a very

young age. That's certainly going to help her succeed."

Undoubtedly those are the same qualities that helped Rowell achieve her dreams, in addition to a foster mother who consistently supported Rowell's talent.

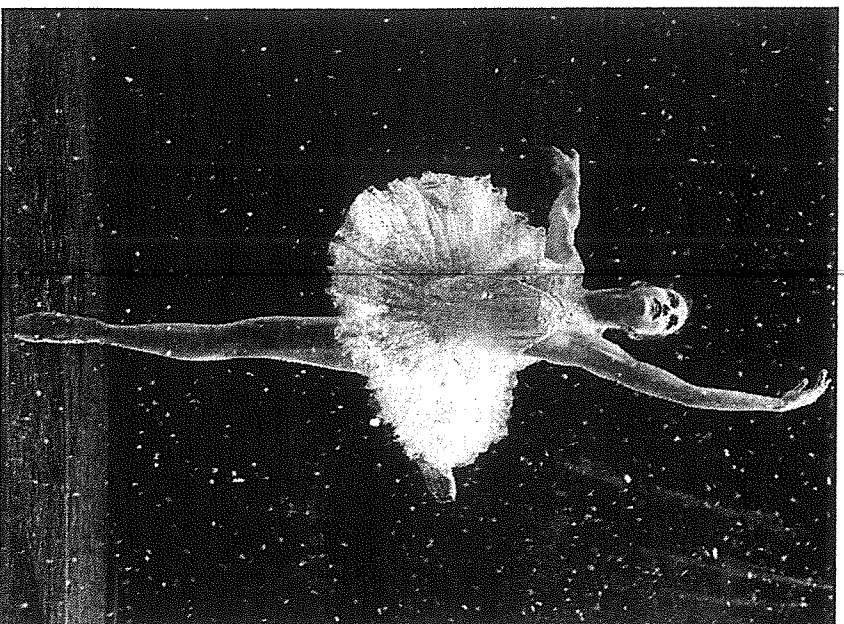
Rowell says, "Here I was, born into a situation where it would seem most unlikely that I would be able to latch onto something which was truly my passion." But she adds that "people who have the most seemingly normal upbringing never find what their true passion and love is."

In addition to her gift of allowing children the chance to learn what they love, Rowell also offers Shirley and other children the gift

of wisdom.

"Through all the temptation, and through all the peer pressure and all of the negativity out there, she has to remain true to herself and to her passion," says Rowell. "For the sake of dance, I know that if she stays true to herself and she stays focused, she will be able to develop a high standard of dance, and that's a tool she can carry in her life and throughout her life whether she decides to become anything other than a dancer." □

Ballet Theatre of Boston performs "The Nutcracker" at the Emerson Majestic Theatre, Boston, Dec. 10-28. Tickets are \$9-\$28. Call (617) 824-8000.



Rebecca Arnold demonstrates solid technique and an irreplaceable glow as the Snow Queen in Ballet Theatre of Boston's "The Nutcracker."

Not just another 'Nutcracker'

BTB's Jose Mateo diverts from the glitz to focus on dance

*By Christie Taylor
CNC Arts Writer*
In Ballet Theatre of Boston's production of "The Nutcracker," you won't see an unbelievably tall Christmas tree and glittery, beaded costumes so closely associated with the other "Nutcracker" production in town.

DANCE REVIEW

What you will see, however, is a performance with original, unusual and at times effective choreography, as well as a cast full of children who clearly have a good time on the stage. As a bonus, a handful of professional dancers in this cast truly shine.

During the show's opening night at the Emerson Majestic Theatre on Dec. 11, Ballet Theatre, led by Artistic Director Jose Mateo (who performs the role of Dr. Drosselmeyer in the ballet), gave a

steady dance performance — Mateo style. His choreographic visions work well, especially when he diverts from the usual "Nutcracker" series of events.

As the curtain rises in Act I on a group of dancers in white tutus waltzing around a Christmas tree, one breathes easily at the break from the usual party scene opener. Here, and in other refreshing moments throughout the show, such as in the beginning of Act II when a flurry of angels grace the stage, Mateo gets the story across with less pantomime and more dancing. His choreography is executed skillfully in the snow scene — another one of the show's strongest moments.

However, while his patterns of steps are full of intricate and technically demanding footwork — as well as lots of body-direction changes — at times some of his dancers aren't up to the challenge. His company isn't blessed

with unlimited rehearsal space and a full coaching staff, and in excerpts such as the Columbine and Harlequin dance in Act I, and the Chocolate (Spanish) dance in Act II, a frenetic energy overtook the steps so that the movements lacked focus. A bit more rehearsal time would remedy this.

Nonetheless, several dancers shone brightly. Rebecca Arnold as the Snow Queen balanced solid technique with an irreplaceable glow, and 12-year-old Wendy Shinzawa did an admirable job as Clara. Meg Flaherty and Victor Camesola, as the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier, stood out in this cast as artists with exquisite control of their craft. □

Ballet Theatre of Boston's "The Nutcracker" is at the Emerson Majestic Theatre, Boston, through Dec. 28. Tickets are \$9-\$28. Call 76177-824-8000.

Dance Review

Ballet Theatre's 'Nutcracker' catches spirit

By Thea Singer
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Choreographer Jose Mateo has made a warm and intimate "Nutcracker" that aims, it seems, to embody the true spirit of Christmas. It comes alive not through materialistic splendor — though the sets are lively (there's even a growing Christmas tree) and the costumes a rich blend of purple, sun yellow, rose, and forest green — but rather through musicality and heart. Unlike more traditional versions of the classic, which are filled with mime and pageantry, the dancing is the star here — dancing that Mateo has attempted to draw straight from the Tchaikovsky score.

More often than not, he succeeds. Consider the part he's crafted for Clara, danced with remarkable articulation and aplomb by 12-year-old Wendy Shinzawa. He's put her en pointe and given her real steps to pursue, including long, stretchy extensions and delicate tours jete. She's like a tiny spark igniting the action in Act I's party scene — a scene that in too many "Nutcrackers" drags under the weight of an overabundance of indicating and not enough movement.

Conversely, Columbine, danced by Elizabeth Scherban, slows the momentum down. True, she's meant



PHOTO/GARY SLOAN

Rebecca Arnold as the Snow Queen with Shaun Curtin.

to be stiff — an elaborate wind-up toy. But her execution is fuzzy — too often you can't tell if her rigidity is written into the choreography or just her own style. An exception is the hilarious moment Dr. Drosselmeyer (Mateo himself) swings her above his shoulder, bent sharp at the waist, heels over head.

Interestingly, the men in this modern-ballet company are frequently the standouts. They seem to embody more fully than the women Mateo's organic thrust: They move straight from their core and understand, in their muscles, the principle of opposition — for a leg to show length, for instance, it must pull in

two directions. Scott Crawford as the Nutcracker Prince moves with elastic grace, and Todd Hall as the Snow King and as Coffee, in the Divertissements section of Act II, exhibits an alarming lushness and depth in the way his arms draw their impetus straight from his back. And the glorious Victor Carnesola, as the Cavalier to Meg Flaherty's Sugar Plum Fairy, has a lift and ballon in his jumps and leaps that knocks your socks off.

As the dancing accelerates in Act II, so do the thrills. Elizabeth Scherban, in pale green and glitter, is an exquisite Dew Drop Fairy. She has a long pellucid line and silken arabesques that seem to go on forever. Ernie Martin on stilts and in giant Bo-Peep costume is a hysterical Mother Ginger who gets the crowd clapping along with him as his adorable Polichinelles escape from beneath his skirt. And the six child-angels, with hands pressed together in prayer and swift flat-footed walks, seem to barely skim the floor.

The music is the message here, and Mateo has told it well.

Christmas spirit shines through in 'Nutcracker'

THEATER

by Iris Fanger

"The Nutcracker," Ballet Theatre of Boston, at the Emerson Majestic, through Dec. 28.

The Ballet Theater of Boston's presentation of "The Nutcracker" opens with a visionary prologue that embodies the spirit of Christmas as it ought to be. A tall snowy fir tree, cov-

ered with pastel colored ornaments, stands against a dark winter sky alive with twinkling stars. Dancing fairies circle the tree, followed by the little girl named Clara, dressed in a flowing nightgown. She finds a box tied with a bow that surely contains the gift of her dreams: a toy nutcracker that will turn into a handsome prince.

Welcome to the 10th anniversary year of Jose Matteo's version of the familiar ballet. Over the decade, the production has grown from its be-

ginnings in Matteo's school to an imaginative retelling of the story, enhanced by a decorative set of painted backdrops and costumes, designed by Roger LaVoie, plus some special effects.

Although the ballet is performed to taped music, Matteo, who has choreographed the entire work, has listened carefully to the tempos and made sure that his dancers have taken them into their bodies.

Matteo has assembled his strengths to include innovative and natural choreography for the many children in the cast and an emphasis on rehearsing the corps de ballet, which provided the most satisfying dancing in last night's performance.

Whether dancing as snowflakes or as flowers in Tchaikovsky's beloved "Waltz of the Flowers," the 10 women shared a verve and a supple carriage of the upper body that is clearly emphasized in Matteo's classes.

Where a small company such as this one is at a disadvantage is in fielding virtuoso performers, yet, there were some surprises.

Wendy Shinzawa, the child who performed the role of Clara, not only danced en pointe but contributed a stage presence that made her a charming focus for Act I.

Matteo's decision to introduce Clara only at the beginning of the second act, then send her off-stage, missed the point of the diversissements or specialty numbers that are presumably staged for Clara's pleasure.

The other find is the Cuban-born dancer, Victor Carnesolta, who performed the role of the Cavalier to the Sugar Plum Fairy of Meg Flaherty.

Now in his second season with Ballet Theater of Boston, Carnesolta fires off some

high-flying leaps distinguished by a can-do spirit that needs to be spread throughout the entire company. Matteo had better keep him under lock and key before he is snapped up by one of the larger troupes.

The first act moves smoothly through the party scene, which contains some charming vignettes of the children at play, to the fantasy sequences of the battle between the mice and the soldiers and the snow storm of falling flakes. Along with Clara, Matteo as



FAIRY TALE: Meg Flaherty and Christopher DeNofo are the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier in 'The Nutcracker.' Last night, the role of the Cavalier was danced by Victor Carnesolta in a stunning performance.

the mysterious Dr. Drosselmeier brings a coherence to the turns of the plot.

The series of second act entertainments are disappointing in their predictability — except for the Arabian dance, where Todd Hall takes on some of the poses seen in old photos of Vaslav Nijinsky, and also the "Waltz of the Flowers," led by Elizabeth Scherban.

By the final coda, the other leading dancers managed to relax and look like they were enjoying the performance as much as the audience.

NAMES & FACES

BY SUSAN BICKELHAUPT AND MAUREEN DEZELL

Anton still high on the high life in LA

Boston investment banker **Joseph Anton** is just back from five days of winning, dining, and vining with art and movie stars of L.A.-L.A. Land. A business adviser, friend, and bridge partner to **Gerard Gealy**, Anton went to not one but two exclusive parties celebrating this week's opening of the \$1 billion Gealy Center in the foothills of the Santa Monica Mountains. "It's quite something to go to an opening of a museum with a descendant of a donor, and have him look at the French furniture, and say, 'I remember this piece,'" Anton said. Also quite something was a dinner party at the home of Paramount Pictures mogul **Sherry Lansing** and her husband, director **William Friedkin**. Friends of Anton's sister, the couple invited him to the premiere of the movie "Ti-

anic," and for a hike to eat before. "I spent most of my time in the library, holding Billy's Oscar (for "The French Connection") and having people take pictures of me," an unshaded Anton said with a laugh. Back in Boston after his whirlwind trip, Anton is wondering what to do for an encore. "I guess I'll just go to the Black Rose and have a beer," he said.

Well, uh, sure, it could be that, too

Overzealous Congressman **Joe Kennedy**, touring Boston's Schlessers Eye Institute this week to help build a case in Congress for more federal research and development funds, was approached by a research scientist. "Congressman, when you're on the floor of the House, look into the eye of one of your Republican colleagues," she said. "If you see redness, it could be the beginnings of a degenerative eye disorder that places like the Schlessers are working to solve." Kennedy looked at her, and replied: "Or he could be stoned."

Galbraith returns to the social swim

Economist and Harvard professor **John Kenneth Galbraith** is back on the social circuit after an absence of several months spent recuperating from a fall. Galbraith was among luminaries at Monday night's dinner at the JFK Library for Irish Prime Minister **Bertie Ahern**. . . . Playwright, author, and performer **Anna Deavere Smith** is in Cambridge this week, working on plans for next summer's Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue to be cosponsored by the American Repertory Theatre and Harvard's W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research. The ART has been flooded with applications and proposals from artists interested in the program since it announced plans last month for the competition think tank and artists' colony.

A good reason to be wild about 'Harry'

Medical resident **Glen Dickson** had no idea **Woody Allen** was a fan of his klezmer group until a Hollywood music agent

ed in using one of our tunes for his film. They said he picks all his own music," said Dickson, leader of the Boston-based group Sholem. A Sholem tune called "Washing" from the CD "Nachles Dream," will be featured in the new Allen film "Deconstructing Harry," opening in Boston on Christmas. No one is more curious about how the music will be used than the band. "Woody Allen's very secretive about how he uses things," Dickson said. "They wouldn't tell us anything."

The drag lady is a draw

Lady Charles may not be royalty, but her visit to Boston Sunday is certainly attracting a lot of interest. The sexy drag queen featured in the book and movie "Milkright at the Garden of Good and Evil" has added an early show at Avolon. In addition to her late-night appearance, **Lochis** who are planning to attend the performance and VIP party include radio talk-show host **David Bradley**, writer **Stephen McCamley**, and MFA director **Melodan Regan**.

He'll give the downbeat for a new year in Bosnia

Charles Ambacher, who's new to Boston but unlikely to be an unknown for long, flies next week to Bosnia, where he'll conduct the Sarajevo Philharmonic on New Year's Eve. The conductor laureate of the Colorado Springs Symphony and a veteran arts administrator, Ambacher is in charge of the still-in-the-planning-stages-and-very-hush-hush Boston 2000 Millennium Commission, whose mandate Mayor **Tom Menino** is expected to announce next month. Ambacher has been involved with cultural projects in the former Soviet Union and Central Europe since he and his wife, former US ambassador to Austria **Swanee Hunt**, moved to Vienna for four years in 1983. He conducted the internationally televised 1995-96 New Year's concert in Sarajevo celebrating the return of civility to Bosnia after three years of war. In late '95, Ambacher wore a helmet and flak jacket to fly in a UN cargo plane to Bosnia, where he met an orchestra "that had striven, and rehearsed wearing coats in heated rooms. This year, Ambacher notes, he's flying on Austrian Airlines to join a revived orchestra that toured Austria last spring.

Baryshnikov collaborator is dancing on air

Spokenly of local artists with European connections, Lexington sound artist **Christopher Janney** reports that his work-in-progress performances with **Mikhail Baryshnikov** of "Heart-



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO/DONALD CHAMRZ

Jose Mateo in the Emerson Majestic.

The little company that could keeps its tough 'Nutmacker' alive

Everyone loves to tout the real meaning of Christmas, and everyone loves an underdog.

Those are two reasons the Ballet Theatre of Boston's "Nutmacker," with its tapped music, low-key costumes, and intimate staging has not only survived in the same Theater District as Boston Ballet's lavish holiday extravaganza, but thrived. Another reason, according to Ballet Theatre artistic director **Jose Mateo**, is the dancing.

"Ours treats the work as a ballet, which the score deserves to have happen," Mateo says. "I think that's the important thing." The Ballet Theatre's "Nutmacker" is in its seventh season at the Emerson Majestic Theatre. And though the show draws a fraction of the crowds at the beloved Boston Ballet production at the Wang Center does, its audience and revenue have grown as audiences for Boston Ballet's "Nutmacker" have shrunk.

At the center of this scrappy stage story is Mateo, who not only choreo-

graphs and rehearses three casts of children and adult dancers, but also performs in the show. Mateo plays a particularly lively and engaged Dr. Drosselmeier, the man who introduces Clara to Nutmacker magic.

"I think Dr. Drosselmeier's role sort of parallels that of my real role as director," says Mateo. "It's Dr. Drosselmeier orchestrating the story that unfolds in the ballet."

Ballet Theatre of Boston experienced a less-than-enchanting post-"Nutmacker" season last year. Faced with financial problems, the company canceled scheduled spring performances to focus on long-term planning. The cancellation, which coincided with tough times for other Boston dance organizations, provoked dire predictions about dance in Boston. But Mateo insists the Ballet Theatre of Boston is stronger, better toned, and more supple for the break.

"We're much better for the changes we made," he said. "It was a very good move."



PHOTO: ROBERT PASTERSON

BANQUET AND BALLET - Boston Ballet artists

Director emeritus **Bruce Marks** getting a hands-on cooking lesson from Boston Park Plaza banquet chef **Jaskino Fernandes** (right) and **Jay Savoia** (left). Marks toured the kitchen to get ready for this winter's Great Recital Festival, during which local

► **Globe correspondent Bill Carmel contributes to this column; material from writers' notes and other sources was used, as well. Names & Faces can be reached by electronic mail at names@lobe.com.**

TEEN *Rat*

BY STACEY URICH

Watching a production of "The Nutcracker" is enough to get even the biggest Grinch into the spirit of the season. Try dancing in it.

"It really does get you into the holiday spirit," said 16-year-old Alexis Przybylski, who is dancing the parts of snow, maid and Chinese dancer in Ballet Theatre of Boston's production of "The Nutcracker" at Emerson Majestic Theatre through Dec. 28.

"You're, like, excited because you realize it's Nutcracker season again. It's all about the Christmas tree and the wonder of the season."

Przybylski is a member of the Ballet Theatre's YouthWorks program, a pre-professional performing group of dancers from the ages of 13 to 17. The touring company of about 10 girls performs at arts festivals, museums and community centers around Massachusetts.

This year, a select few were chosen for company roles in Ballet Theatre's 10th annual performance of "The Nutcracker," an honor usually reserved for professionals.

"We've always had young dancers involved in many of the child roles, but these girls represent really a whole new step for ballet," said Ballet Theatre's artistic director and instructor Jose Mateo. "We're training girls who will be ready for professional careers upon graduation. It's a very important sign for us, and I'm very proud of them."

The highlight of any ballerina's December is a part in the "Nutcracker," and the teens are particularly psyched for their special roles this year.

"I've been here four years, and each 'Nutcracker,' the parts and the experiences have gotten better," said Erin Martin, a sophomore at Our Lady of Nazareth Academy in Wakefield, who is dancing the parts of a doll, snow and a Chinese dancer.

But with the glory comes hard work. Alyssa Bullard, 17, an Ayer High School senior, has an adjusted school schedule and leaves early to commute more than one hour to "Nutcracker" practice, which is scheduled six days a week.

"It does get stressful, but we have so much fun. You just really don't think about (the work)," said Bullard, who is dancing as snow, a maid and a doll presented to Clara.

"A lot of times, we're too busy to even enjoy (the holidays), but when people come to see us, it definitely adds to our holiday spirit," said Bullard.

Mateo boasts of the teens' dedication to their art, even during the hectic holiday rush that can make even the most serious professional nutty.

"One very important part of their participation is that they do remain so focused and they are very dedicated," Mateo said. "They understand the kind of attention to detail that's necessary."

Przybylski credits the camaraderie the young ballerinas find during rehearsals as a big reason for their success — and their sanity.

"There's not a whole lot of time to spend with outside friends, but luckily we all get along really well here," said the Wayland High School junior.

"We're all striving for the same thing, so we have a lot in common."

Contrary to popular belief, the "dream part" for young girls is not playing Clara. In fact, Clara



SNOW SCENE: Teens join adult performers in Ballet Theatre of Boston's 'The Nutcracker' at the Emerson Majestic Theatre through Dec. 28. Below, from left, dancers Alexis Przybylski, 16, of Wayland, Erin Martin, 16, of Wakefield and Alyssa Bullard, 17, of Ayer are this year's pre-professional additions to the production. The company has been performing 'The Nutcracker' for the last 10 years.

Staff photos by Mark

is old hat to veteran performer Martin, who played the part several years ago in the Boston Ballet's production. Instead, the three girls all hope to dance their way to Sugarplum Fairies or Snow Queen. The rule they live by is the same as their advice to younger dancers hoping to follow in their pointe shoes: "Just don't give up," Bullard said. "It takes a lot of hard work, and sooner or later, you'll make it."

Performances are through Dec. 28 at the Emerson Majestic Theatre, 219 Tremont St., Boston. Call (617) 824-8000 for more information.

