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## Mateo reworks a classic ballet

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There are dancing snowflakes, waltzing flowers, toys that come vividly to life and a young girl

## Dance Review

named Clara whose fertile imagination unleashes it all.

But in Jose Mateo's Ballet Theatre production of "The Nutcracker," which opened its 13th annual presentation to the press Thursday night, the ballet is infused with some nontraditional elements as well that enliven the proceedings considerably. In addition, Mateo has streamlined the story and dispensed with a great deal of the turgid mime in the first act, and the whole moves along at a well-oiled clip.

While Ballet Theatre's version. known as the "other Nutcracker," cannot compete with Boston Ballet's immensely popular production in terms of sheer opulence and theatrical magic, Mateo's reconception has the benefit of intimacy and affordability. Though grandiose productions can overwhelm smaller children, Ballet Theatre's "Nutcracker" is completely accessible, and in the small environs of the Emerson Majestic feels up close and personal. And though the dancing also can't compare in technical virtuosity to Boston Ballet's, Mateo's young troupe seems solidly trained and he does an excellent job with the large corps of children woven throughout the production. This "Nutcracker," which focuses strongly on choreography that moves and features substantial dancing the moment the curtain arises, provides an excellent introduction not only to this specific ballet, but to the genre in general.

Mateo treats the ingenue character of Clara as a major role, and in Thursday night's production. Alexandra Adomaitis was a charming presence and did an excellent job with the pointe work Mateo crafted for the part. As usual, Mateo himself was compelling as the beneficent, magically inclined Dr. Drosselmeyer. In the first act, Leticia Guerrero de Rosario, partnered by Carl Adams. was a terrific Columbine, muscular and sharply etched as the doll come to life. Matt White made a handsome if not particularly personable Nutcracker. Elizabeth Scherban was elegant and assured as the Snow Queen. Mateo's addition of four Snow Princes (instead of a Snow King) brought a nice sense of depth to the newly choreographed Snowflakes dance, with vivid ensemble patterns complemented by arresting lifts.

Choreography for the character dances in the second act was a bit lackluster in spots, but there were some standout numbers. Kim Carnevale and Florian Eckhardt had great pizazz as well as finesse in the Spanish-flavored "Chocolate." Rosario, partnered by Alejandro Gomez, was sultry and sensual in the exotic "Coffee." Debbi Burns made a gracious, luxuriously fluid Dew Drop Fairy, and Mara Vivas, with Daniel Hohagen, exhibited clarity, elegance, and occasional dazzle as the Sugar Plum Fairy.

## Jose Mateo's Ballet Theatre "The Nutcracker"

Emerson Majestic Theatre, Thursday night (through Dec. 30)