

Living Arts

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Dance Review

Mateo mixes it up in moving premiere

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Jose Mateo practices a brazen sort of classicism. His dances spring from music — which, in the opening show Friday night, was an inventive mix, from Antonio Vivaldi to Paul Haley to Max Bruch. And they are concerned first and foremost with structure, dynamics, and proportion. But they are also built of a vocabulary that is as grounded as it is airborne, and that conveys not just concepts like line and direction, but also feelings, even attitude.

"Outer Hebrides," the premiere on the program, perhaps embodies that aesthetic most completely. Set to a vibrant score for organ by Paul Haley, the piece has a decidedly folk-dance quality, complete with heart-quickenings steps that recall Irish step-dancing, and circling segments that bring to mind court dances.

The seven performers in the cast barrel around the stage full throttle, practically becoming the reverberating chords. The dance was presented in September as a work in progress at the

Hallowed Dances

Five Ballets by Jose Mateo,
Ballet Theatre

At: Old Cambridge Baptist Church,
Cambridge (Program repeats
through Sunday)

dedication of the Old Cambridge Baptist Church's new organ, and the dancers deliver the choreography, as if on a personal mission.

If "Outer Hebrides" is the most personal of the dances on the roster, "Isle of the Dead" (1992), set to dramatic music by Sergei Rachmaninoff, is the most timely. An ode to hope born of devastation, the piece is hard to watch without thinking of the state of the world today. In it, classical lines are broken and reconstituted. Legs and arms plie, for example, dangling like broken wings. Hands flex overhead as if warding off a blight. Long leg brushes carry the weight of a cry.

Elizabeth Scherban and Davide Vittorino together are particularly striking. As a couple, they are at once as soft as velvet and as resil-



GLOBE STAFF FILE PHOTO/MATTHEW J. LEE

Jose Mateo offers a ballet that pushes classicism through tradition, even into novelty.

ient as the human spirit.

The darkly ironic "House of Ballet" (1993) presents a jumble of ballet styles through history: arch classicism, lyrical romanticism, staunch modernism. Jolanta Valeikaite-Suter moves with almost mechanical precision, sharpening her steps to a point. Other women float by on a cloud of innocence, or pierce the space with black intent. A ripple of triplets executed by a group of women runs beneath the action at one juncture; at another,

elbows and knees turn inward, then out again, in exaggerated drama. The dance has a carnivalesque quality to it, as if Mateo is almost mocking the excesses of the art form he reveres.

The curves and pulses of the mythological "The Siren," set to Vivaldi, bring not just soloists but, in a contemporary spin, the corps of Ballet Theatre to the fore. It's a dance for nine women (the Sirens) and one man (the prey).

The women run circles around the lush Vittorino and, in a further nod to modernism, swing over a bent front leg. Their role is just as strong as Vittorino's, and the single Siren who's drawn to him.

The final dance, "Bruch Concerto," made this year to Max Bruch's thrumming score, explores the various shapes a relationship can take over time. It's an exuberant display of racing patterns and lyrical partnering that would have been better served by the distance permitted by a proscenium stage than in the intimate space of the Sanctuary Theatre. With 13 dancers, things just get too busy from close up.