

Living Arts

THE BOSTON GLOBE MONDAY, APRIL 30, 2001

A 'Resurgence' of simple pleasures

► **MATEO**
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processional, followed by men, until 16 dancers filled the stage. While the choreography is austere and solemn, you do build a warm relationship with the dancers. Because of their proximity, you see them as individuals even when they're performing in unison. They are, by the way, a confident, well-trained group that understands that in this setting anything resembling histrionics just won't work.

Mateo's aesthetic is an extension of Balanchine's. It's formal and Euclidean, with emotional and quasi-narrative currents that never quite bubble to the surface. Watch closely and you're rewarded with subtle surprises, like the asymmetrical tableau that ends the "Overture." When it was done, Mateo himself came onstage and spoke briefly about the "laboratory for choreography and the way to present it" that he hopes to establish in this space.

The andante from Beethoven's "Pastoral" symphony prompted Mateo to make an innocent, Garden of Eden romp about courtship and coupling, a chance for soaring lifts and a romantic triangle that goes unresolved. More Beethoven — the oddly modern Grosse Fuge in B-flat — inspired "Dark Profiles," an exercise in torment. In the leads, Meg Flaherty and Jesse Zimmerman were agitated; their movements erupted rather than flowed. A magpie-like chorus of women followed the central drama and formed a lurking backdrop. There was a chase-and-capture scene, even a bit of violence in the way Zimmerman manipulated Flaherty's limbs. She triumphed, though. At the end she stood alone, having defiantly dispatched

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Jose Mateo's Ballet Theatre
At: Old Cambridge Baptist Church,
Saturday night (repeats this Friday
through Sunday)
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everyone else from her domain.

"Bruch Concerto," set to that composer's Violin Concerto No. 1, is also about a relationship, with Kim Carnevale and Florian Eckhardt the central pair. Carnevale is a radiant presence in a voluptuous, rounded duet with Eckhardt. Mateo shows particular ingenuity

with their arm movements, which go beyond the classical canon to look like wigs or even seaweed.

Simple elegance ruled every aspect of this performance. At a moment when the ballet world is spiraling downward into mere spectacle and dancing is overwhelmed by costumes, decor, and special effects because the managers of big troupes think that's what audiences want, it's refreshing to see Mateo's back-to-basics approach, which is anything but basic in its appeal.

Dance Review

Basics are back at Jose Mateo's Ballet Theatre

By Christine Temin
GLOBE STAFF

The setting is a weird combination of a Gothic church and the kind of Astaire-era nightclub where people sat at little round tables arranged in tiers. The combination of sacred and secular suits the space's new identity — as a home for Jose Mateo's Ballet Theatre, back in business after a five-year hiatus.

The performance area is actually the sanctuary of the Old Cambridge Baptist Church. The audience sits at the little tables, sipping wine while watching the program, "Resurgence," which consists of four new works by Mateo, all to serious scores: Bach, Beethoven, Bruch. The intimacy bestows a sense of privilege; it's like being in one of those private theaters built for European monarchs.

At the back of the room is a white wall with three doors cut into it, blackness beyond. In ballet's usual proscenium-arch setting, dancers enter from the sides of the stage. Mateo has the option of also having them confront the audience head-on, as they did in the opening