

DANCE

MAGAZINE

THE WORLD AT YOUR FEET

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TREY MCINTYRE PROJECT REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

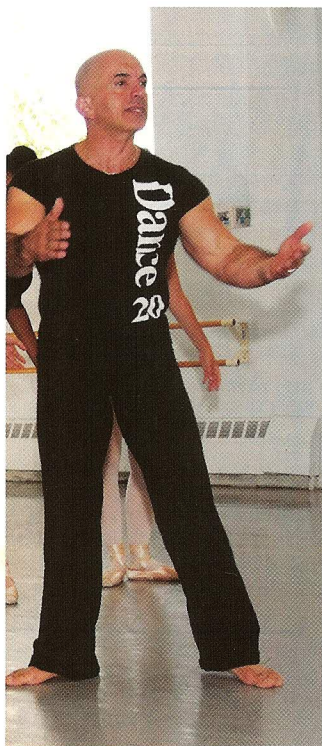
BFA OR
BA?
THE RIGHT
CHOICE
FOR YOU

ASHLEY
BOUDER
WHY I DANCE

Left to right:
John Michael Schert,
Trey McIntyre
and Chanel DaSilva

THE
SCHOLARSHIP
GUIDE
MONEY
FOR CLASS
& MORE!





Ballet classes are held in Studio Two, on the second floor. Left, Joe Cavise in class.

From *Cats* to Kids

Dance Cavise has made a broad menu the key to its success. **BY MIKE SMITH**

When Joe Antony Cavise hung up his *Cats* costume for the final time in 1987 to teach dance full-time, Broadway's loss was students' gain. Since then, thousands of students have passed through his Dance Cavise, making the studio one of the most successful in the New York City area—and it's all by word of mouth. What's the winning formula? It starts with Cavise himself, a dynamic evangelist for the power of dance. But the railroad station across the street helps, too.

A fit, compact man in his early 50s with the build of a collegiate wrestler, Cavise started dancing at age 9. He studied with Gus Giordano in Chicago, earning his Equity card there in 1981. Then he headed for New York. He hit it lucky, landing a role right away in an off-Broadway production of *Street Scene*. This led to an agent, which led to national tours and eventually to a leading role in *Cats*. After four years, he left the Great White Way to start his own dancing school.

Being across the street from the train makes it easy to get teachers from New York.

A Class for Everyone

In 1989 Joe and his wife, Lori, also a dancer, opened Dance Cavise in a three-story former synagogue in

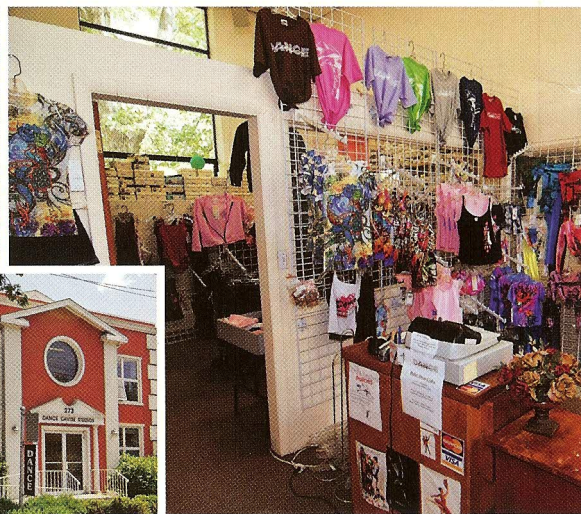
Mamaroneck, New York, an affluent suburb. At the time, he remembers, there were three other studios in the area; now there are about 30. Today Dance Cavise teaches more than 500 students, including Joe and Lori's two daughters. To compete with nearby schools, the Cavises offer something for everyone and all ages: a wide variety of disciplines—the usual dance genres, and also Pilates classes, ballroom, voice and drama, even kickboxing.

The school is in a stand-alone building on the banks of the Mamaroneck River, a glorified creek with easy parking in a private lot alongside. There's a garden walk and an outdoor patio overlooking the river where students can eat in good weather.

But six years ago the river turned nasty: A flood filled the downstairs studios with five feet of water. Fortunately there were two more studios above the

high-water mark. The school also houses a small but well-stocked dance shop for students, Cavise Boutique, and a minimal self-service snack bar.

The river adds ambiance, but more important to Dance Cavise is the Mamaroneck Metro-North commuter rail station, right across the



Students use an outdoor patio in summer for snack breaks; Dance Cavise is housed in a former synagogue right across the street from the train station; the studio has its own boutique, which sells branded dancewear.

street; it's about a 30-minute ride to New York City. The easy train ride and brief walk from station to studio means the instructor corps includes many working dancers and choreographers with credentials from prestigious schools and dance companies.

The Cavise Philosophy

Unlike some schools in the area, Dance Cavise stresses technique over competition. Students and parents looking to enter the competition circuit will probably find a better fit at another school. Students are placed in one of three levels: "A" students are those who come for fun. "B" students are regulars who come back every year. Students with serious dance aspirations strive to rise to the pre-professional "C" level. They must show exceptional promise and be recommended by one of the dance teachers.

During the summer, Dance Cavise shifts to a Broadway focus with a program that puts on shows written, choreographed, and performed by students of Camp Cavise, an on-site day camp for kids from kindergarten through 8th grade. The students take dance classes, go on field trips to Broadway theaters, and learn set and costume design while preparing an end-of-session show. Camp Cavise is "all about the show," says Cavise. "It's performance-oriented." (It's also a way to keep revenue coming in at a time when many schools go on hiatus.)

The studio also generates additional revenue by renting space to the general public for birthday parties and other celebrations. Studio One, on the ground floor, can be divided by a curtain to create the effect of a stage, and the birthday girl can be the star of her own show. There's even a glitter ball for atmosphere. The host provides refreshments and

paper goods, studio staff do the rest—the party package includes invitations and thank-you notes.

The Joy of Dance

Finally, Cavise himself has taken an active role in the community: He believes passionately that anybody can dance, and anybody can enjoy dance—and he proves it year after year with his Off Center Dance Theatre. Founded by Cavise in 1991, it has since evolved into a philanthropic arts organization focusing on community outreach. (It is a separate nonprofit based at the studio.)

The ensemble, made up of Dance Cavise students chosen by audition, visits children's hospitals, works with children's organizations like Ronald McDonald House, UNICEF, and HELPUSA, and performs at annual fundraisers alongside professional artists. This year, the OCDT Invitational featured Gabrielle Lamb of Morphoses, who performed a piece choreographed for the invitational.

While Cavise stresses that OCDT is a separate entity from Dance Cavise, nevertheless when you do good things for your community, good things tend to come back to you. And it gives students a chance to perform with a purpose beyond simply entertaining their families and friends.

The Secret to His Success?

There's no secret to Dance Cavise's success, despite its home in an area crowded with dance schools. It's a combination of a good location; a strong instructor corps; well-equipped studio spaces; and, most of all, a dance master who's fervent about his love of the art. If Joe Cavise, like Mr. Mistoffelees, had nine lives, he'd spend them all teaching kids to dance. *
Mike Smith writes often on dance and business.