



## A Tip Off For New World Dancers

Nine is the magic number.

Nine advanced dance students from the New World School of the Arts (NWSA) in downtown Miami have been chosen by veteran choreographer Michael Uthoff to perform his latest creation. It still does not have a name, and its premiere is far off (set for next April) as part of the school's college spring concert. But Uthoff conceived the piece specifically for the NWSA's dance division, and he spent almost two weeks, from the end of October to the beginning of November, with the young male and female dancers he selected to bring his conception to life.

Old classmate Daniel Lewis had invited him. Lewis, founder and dean of NWSA's dance division, just received his third Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Dance Education Organization, recognizing Lewis' significant contribution in the field of dance during a career that spans more than four decades. He'll be leaving his post next June, "and he asked me to come up with a piece for what will be his last program," shares Uthoff with Artburstmiami on his last day in Miami, a Friday, and just less than two days before he returned home to St. Louis, where he has been the artistic and executive director of the Dance St. Louis company since 2006.

"There are four men and five women dancing in three movements that utilize music from [Argentine composer Alberto] Ginastera to [Eric] Satie and composer George Winston," explains Uthoff, while the rehearsal director, Tina Santos, follows the dancers' every move. The relationship with NWSA, he explains, stems from the fact that he's known Lewis for many years.

"Danny and I were classmates at Juilliard a long time ago, and we also both danced in the José Limón Company," remembers Uthoff. "Then we both went our ways but, for one reason or another, we always knew what the other was doing. Then sometime in the early 1990s, he asked me to come work with his students, and I created several pieces for them. The goal has been to give these students an experience that would be like the professional experiences they will encounter once they leave school."

Uthoff, who recently acted as a panelist in the selection of the winners of the Dance Miami Choreographers Fellowship Program 2010-2011, highlights what makes the NWSA dance students different.

"What this school has, is a value for dance, an energy, and a passion that you seldom find in other schools," says Uthoff. "Maybe you will find in other places bodies that are better adapted to classical technique, but these kids have an impressive commitment to their craft."