

Making connections with Carolyn Dorfman Dance, at the Bickford in Morris Township

November 3, 2015 by [Kevin Coughlin](#)

You could say the stage is Carolyn Dorfman's canvas, and dancers are her paint.

But paint dries. Dorfman's dancers never stand still long enough for that; they are swirling swaths of color, perpetual plot machines, emotions in motion.

During three eclectic pieces at the [Morris Museum's Bickford Theatre](#) on Sunday, members of [Carolyn Dorfman Dance](#) explored relationships. We are tribes of individuals, forever striving to belong while clinging to what sets us apart.



DON'T MAKE 'WAVES'...unless you are from Carolyn Dorfman Dance. Photo by Kevin Coughlin

"For me, it's all about connections," said Dorfman, whose choreography is informed by her upbringing in a family of Holocaust survivors.



Katlyn Waldo and Louie Marin of Carolyn Dorfman Dance, Photo by Kevin Coughlin

Under My Skin, a duet starring Katlyn Waldo and Louie Marin, was like a Harry Houdini act in reverse: The dancers tried to get into the straitjacket. Together.

"It's two really strong people coming together. They're not one person. But they're connected," explained Dorfman, who started her company more than 30 years ago. "All my work is about bringing people together."

Brothers. Chairs and tables levitated, with and without relatives anxious to finish the ritual reading of the Haggadah and eat.

A wedding sequence with masks on the back of the bride's and groom's heads (Ae-Soon Kim and Justin Dominic) playfully poked the boundary between reality and illusion, and the dual nature lurking within us all.

The finale, WAVES, married musical waves — from a cello, recorder and beat-boxer— with movement to create "a human wave" of connections, Dorfman said.

FLUID...WITHOUT BREAKING A SWEAT

What separates her dancers from painters, sculptors and

The Klezmer Sketch celebrated family and religious bonds, with a Passover Seder worthy of the Marx



'The Klezmer Sketch' performed by Carolyn Dorfman Dance at the Bickford Theatre. Photo by Kevin Coughlin

musicians is their athleticism. They are artists and athletes. Superb athletes.

How do they prepare themselves for demanding shows like this one, an hour of constant hoisting and twirling and rolling, with heavy exertion that looks effortless, and motion that is fluid without (seemingly) breaking a sweat?



EYES IN THE BACK OF THEIR HEADS: Justin Dominic and Ae-Soon Kim of Carolyn Dorfman Dance. Photo by Kevin Coughlin

their dance pieces. Warm-ups may last 90 minutes. Pilates, Dorfman said, is an ideal match for her no-mirrors approach to rehearsals. Traditionally, dancers prepare from the outside-in, she said. But strength radiates from the inside-out.

“To me, it’s about feeling, seeing and knowing what your body is about,” Dorfman said.

“The key is happiness,” said Waldo, a Texas native who at 31 is one of the most senior dancers in the 10-person troupe.

The rest of the time, she said, her diet is an energy-rich mix of protein and complex carbohydrates. On performance days, she’ll breakfast on eggs, yogurt or oatmeal, with light snacks of fruit or almonds. Hydration is important too — she drinks lots of water, with electrolytes.

Cross-training is essential as well. One dancer is an avid swimmer; another just completed her first triathlon.

Like several of her Carolyn Dorfman Dance colleagues, Waldo teaches Pilates. Five days a week, the dancers perform exercises tailored to