

Wednesday, December 31, 2025

Francis Patrelle, Choreographer and Founder of Dances Patrelle, Has Passed Away

Company: Dances Patrelle
Venue: Dances Patrelle
Location: New York, NY

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Dances Patrelle (dP) announces with great sorrow the passing of its beloved founder, Francis Patrelle. He passed at Baptist Hospital in Pensacola, FL, in the afternoon on December 27, 2025.

Francis was born on May 10, 1947 to Elvira and Joseph Patrelle. He grew up in Bucks County, Pennsylvania and moved to New York City to attend Juilliard, where he studied under Sir Antony Tudor. Francis began his ballet teaching career in the 1970's, and taught for forty years. He was the dance director at USDAN for more than a decade and briefly taught ballet at Barnard. But the two places he loved most were Manhattan School of Music, where for decades he taught Opera Students how to move and dance, and Ballet Academy East. As a teacher, Francis was a legend. His class was musical and challenging, and if any teacher truly loved his students, Francis did. At no point did he look down on them. They were his people. They were his family.

Dances Patrelle began in 1987 as a showplace for Francis' gifts. He had already created many ballets for the Albany Berkshire Ballet and was the choreographer for Hal Prince's Turandot at the Vienna State Opera. But Francis wanted to create things that would be his. Francis' ballets are about people. The characters in a Patrelle work have inner lives, hopes, and dreams. They are sometimes wicked, often cruel, underhanded or devious. They strive for love, more than anything. They wrestle with real problems, the issues of our shared humanity.

A list of Francis works must include MacBeth, What Do We Do About Mother?, Black Forest Carousel, Glad to Be Unhappy, Romeo and Juliet, Rhapsody in Blue, American Overture, Madame X, Gilbert and Sullivan, The Ballet!, and of course The Yorkville Nutcracker. Cynthia Gregory, Jenifer Ringer, James Fayette, Lourdes Lopez, Jock Soto, Abi Stafford, Marcelo Gomes, Donald Williams, Tyler Angle, Miriam Miller, Jared Angle, Ask La Cour, and so many other great names of ballet returned to work with Francis on numerous projects.

Francis was a great collaborator. He worked for years with costume designer Rita Watson, lighting designer David Grill, and set designer Gillian Bradshaw-Smith, the people he credited with the look of his work. He collaborated on four ballets with composer Patrick Soluri, including what he thought was his masterwork, Madame X. He collaborated with author Justin Allen on three ballets, including Gilbert and Sullivan, The Ballet!, which he considered his greatest crowd-pleasing success.

Francis leaves behind no children, no husband. His ballets, his dancers, his students, his audience – these were his great loves and his family.

Donations may be made in his honor to Dances Patrelle at <https://www.paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1365571>.

About Francis Patrelle

A graduate of Juilliard, Mr. Patrelle's flair for dramatic ballet has been seen everywhere from Tokyo and Rome to Toronto, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and most often in New York City. He created roles for the greatest dancers of our age and also choreographed extensively for opera, including the Santa Fe Opera, Vienna State Opera, and Willie Stark for the Houston Grand Opera, which was performed at the Kennedy Center and televised on PBS's Great Performances.

Mr. Patrelle made considerable contributions to classical ballet. During his ten years as resident choreographer for the Albany Berkshire Ballet, he created two full-length classics: Romeo and Juliet and Firebird. As principal choreographer at the St. Louis Ballet he created a full-length Swan Lake. And with Dances Patrelle he created Macbeth ('95), followed by The Yorkville Nutcracker ('96).

In 1988, Dances Patrelle was founded as an outlet for Mr. Patrelle's distinctive gift for choreography. He created dozens of ballets for the company, including his beloved American songbook series: American Dreamer, Rhapsody In Blue, Jazz/Fools, Come Rain/Come Shine, Glad to be Unhappy, and POP!

Mr. Patrelle was likewise known as a gifted and passionate teacher. In addition to many years at Manhattan School of Music, he served on the faculty at Ballet Academy East. He also choreographed works for students at Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet, Juilliard Dance Ensemble, and The Ballet School of Stamford. He considers mentoring an essential facet of the art form.

In 1999, Mr. Patrelle was presented the Arts Recognition Tribute Award (ARTY) by the Long Island Arts Council for outstanding contributions to arts in the region. Mr. Patrelle has received three Dance Magazine Foundation grants for new ballets. In 2008, he was honored with the prestigious Choo San Goh Award for Choreography in support of his ballet Is That All There Is?

For dP's 20th Anniversary, Mr. Patrelle created a new murder mystery ballet, Murder at the Masque: The Casebook of Edgar Allan Poe, with a commissioned score by Patrick Soluri, and an original story by award winning novelist Justin Allen. In 2011, Mr. Patrelle's newest evening-length work, Gilbert and Sullivan, The Ballet!, premiered, featuring Music Director Warren Helms and the co-creation of the original story by Justin Allen. In 2013, dP was named Resident company of Kaatsbaan International Dance Center. In 2019, Mr. Patrelle premiered The American Dream, It's Only Business, and in 2021, Separation, a video ballet with Abi Stafford and Ask La Cour.

Mr. Patrelle was the recipient of the first ever Playing Field Award for Choreographic Achievement from Kaatsbaan International Dance Center and was presented with a Proclamation of Excellence in Artistic Achievement by District 5 Council Member Ben Kallos.

About the Company

Dances Patrelle (dP) is a dynamic professional ballet company celebrating its 35th season! dP presents two annual seasons in New York – the timeless holiday tradition, The Yorkville Nutcracker, and a spring repertory season featuring world premieres and classic Patrelle favorites. Mr. Patrelle's body of work includes over 50 original ballets choreographed for Dances Patrelle, and spans an incredibly wide range of styles, from his beloved American Songbook collection to such contemporary classics as Madame X, Macbeth and Rhapsody in Blue. Heralded by Lynn Garafola in Dance Magazine as a choreographer with "a personal vision...classical because it is rooted in metaphor and symbolic language [and] populist because of its legibility and broad cultural resonance." Patrelle has also cultivated a long-time collaboration with composer Patrick Soluri, commissioning four original scores including 2009's Murder at the Masque for dP's 20th Anniversary. Known for attracting the great talent of each generation, Dances Patrelle is pleased to count ballet stars such as Marcelo Gomes, Jenifer Ringer, Donald Williams, Lourdes Lopez, and Cynthia Gregory among its dancers. For 26 seasons, Dances Patrelle has tapped into the human experience, connecting intimately with the audience and continuously reinventing dramatic dance. In 2013, the company was named the resident ballet company of the Kaatsbaan International Dance Center.

"In Francis Patrelle's ballets, the characters come alive. His choreography is full of heart and soul." – Cynthia Gregory, Prima Ballerina

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Schedule
December 31, 2025: 8:00pm

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