

dancers among us

EXHIBITION AT BROOKFIELD PLACE

THE STORIES

1 Shopping Spree | Jennifer Lauren, Samantha Hope Galler, Maya Collins | Miami, FL 2015

Sometimes the simplest shots are the most difficult to get. I was spending a stifling July weekend with Miami City Ballet, shooting all day and night for an upcoming exhibition. I had three ballerinas and the sun was setting, so I needed something quick. The idea was so obvious I couldn't believe I'd never shot it before- friends shopping together! However, it quickly became extremely complicated. Passers-by constantly interrupted the process, and coordinating the movements so the ballerinas would look both casual and coordinated became increasingly difficult. I shot over 400 frames in an hour before we got this moment.

2 Balancing Act | Maria Pucciarelli | New York, NY 2014

This concept began when I asked a simple question—

“What would you be doing right now if you weren't here?”

“Studying history.”

Perfect scenario, and fortunately she had history notes in her backpack. I wanted to take advantage of Maria's incredible strength and contortion, so I asked her to show me a creative way to study. She definitely surprised me with her creativity! But there was something missing. It felt incomplete.

"What do you drink when you study?" I asked.

"Iced tea," she replied.

"Can you balance it on your foot?"

"I have no idea."

It was worth a try. Maria would get into position and her mother would balance the tea, then run out of the frame. Maria could hold it for about ten seconds. We lost five iced teas before we got it. Once the guy in the background turned around I knew we had the shot!

3 Corkscrew | Kitty Conlon | Chicago, IL 2015

It was 2am in Chicago when Kitty suggested this crazy idea.

Jordan: "You can balance on a wine bottle, *en pointe*, without breaking it?"

Kitty: "Usually."

The shoot lasted three seconds before the bottle shattered on the pavement. But how did she get up there in the first place? It was a three person operation- one person held her elbow, another held the bottle, and they both ran out of the frame once she got into position. I shot five photos in three seconds before the wine ended up on the sidewalk.

4 Storming the Gate | Elizabeth Mateer, Alexander Peters | Philadelphia, PA 2014

The Magic Garden mosaics in Philadelphia pop up throughout the city. I was shooting with Pennsylvania Ballet for an exhibition in Philadelphia when we turned the corner and discovered this magical location. It also happened to be someone's private property. "It's better to ask forgiveness than permission," is one of my

favorite quotes, so I quickly started setting up the shot. It looks simple but was extremely difficult because of the arm strength it took to hold the position. Watch the video presentation to see the dancers bodies shaking in slow motion and you'll get an idea of the challenges they faced.

5 'Tis the Season | Ryan Breslin, Jacob Guzman, Julian DeGuzman, David Guzman, Evan Kasprzak | New York, NY 2012

This is one of the most difficult photographs of my career. I saw the iconic Cartier building on my way to meet five dancers from the Broadway hit Newsies. Then I saw the Salvation Army attendant several blocks away, and convinced him to stand in this new location. Next I asked the dancers what pose they could all hit simultaneously to make it look like they were in line donating to the Salvation Army. How they did it is almost impossible to believe- watch the video to see the secret.

Once we started, a big crowd gathered, stopping foot traffic on the very busy avenue. Cars, busses, bicyclists and pedestrians kept walking in the background. A security guard wanted me to stop because we were blocking the doorway of his store. The attendant was getting frustrated, and I kept demanding that we do it again. The dancers had the challenging task of staying synchronized in the midst of this mayhem. After over fifty attempts, we finally got this shot, and German RTL TV recorded the entire adventure.

6 Splash | Lauren Fadeley, Francis Veyette | Philadelphia, PA 2014

Driving around Philadelphia with Pennsylvania Ballet, I asked to see iconic locations. They took me to the Ben Franklin Bridge. I saw a loading ramp for boats and immediately wanted a shot in the dirty Delaware River. Lauren and Francis are married, so I took advantage of their natural intimacy. The backlight would illuminate the water nicely, so I suggested a kick. Getting Lauren to hit the perfect arch of water while making the kiss look effortless was no easy task in the cold river. Watch the video to see some our failed attempts.

7 Pride | Emily Bowen, Katelyn May, Elise Elliott | New York, NY 2013

I was spending a fall day in NYC with Houston Ballet, shooting for their 2014 promotional ad campaign. It was really cold! My suggestion to jump into freezing water was not well received by three ballerinas with a combined body fat of 1%. I promised it would be really fast- under two minutes. I quickly broke that promise once the rainbow appeared. I kept screaming for them to do it again and again as I searched for different angles to catch the full arch of the rainbow. A crowd gathered, cheering them on. It was spectacular! Ten minutes later, they climbed out of the fountain, frozen and exhilarated!

8 Waiting for a Ride | Michaela DePrince | Becket, MA 2013

Possibly my very favorite photo, this is the only *Dancers Among Us* print to hang in my studio. Michaela is a famous ballerina with the Dutch National Ballet, pop culture fashion icon and author of the best-selling memoir *Taking Flight*, so I had limited time and high hopes. As I was driving to the shoot, I saw this picturesque road and had the idea of a ballerina hitchhiking across the country. I asked Michaela to arrive with a backpack, and we started setting up the shot. A car drove by us and this dog stuck his head out the window, so I immediately chased down the driver to borrow the dog. I could have scouted for six months and I wouldn't have found a more perfect dog! It was like central casting! Then we had to get Michaela to nail the pose while the dog looked straight ahead. Since I don't do any digital manipulation on my images, it all had to happen at the same moment. It took over 200 jumps before we got it! Michaela was exhausted and the dog was ready for a snack. Check out the video to see the full adventure.

9 Raindancer | Annmaria Mazzini | New York, NY 2009

I photographed Paul Taylor Dance Company star Annmaria Mazzini prior to this shoot, but she had emailed me asking for another opportunity. I thought she had done great the first time, but she was insistent. "I can do better," she wrote. She certainly did! I knew a storm was coming and chose the exterior of Macy's as our

location. In the span of thirty minutes, Annmaria did forty-five running jumps in heels during the downpour. Since this was one of my first shoots, I didn't have enough experience to comprehend the difficulty of jumping in these conditions. Inspiration for this image came from a famous fashion photograph by Richard Avedon.

10 Rock Star | Matt Oakes | New York, NY 2012

I mentioned a singing-in-the-shower idea to Matt over the phone, and when I arrived at his apartment he was fully prepared. He had purchased a clear shower curtain and added a sticky mat to the bottom of the tub for a safe landing. At the time of the shoot, Matt was starring in the off-Broadway sensation *Sleep No More*, so he certainly couldn't risk injury. Still he jumped eighty times before my camera got too steamed up to function. Matt seemed completely comfortable with the nudity, but with that body, what would you expect?

11 Under the Boardwalk | Jill Wilson, Jacob Jonas | Santa Monica, CA 2012

Real-life couple Jacob and Jill came up with this pose in about three minutes. It makes me wonder if they actually kiss this way. This shoot was very sentimental for me; I lived in Los Angeles for several years as a teenager, and I spent lots of time under similar boardwalks. The way I remember it, my body looked just like Jacob's.

12 Red Sky at Night | Avaree Jade | Culver City, CA 2015

This photo was taken for my upcoming book, *Tiny Dancers Among Us* (Workman Publishing, 2018). 10-year-old Avaree Jade emailed me, and her letter was so persuasive I got on a plane and flew to Los Angeles. We drove to the top of Culver City and started shooting flower-picking stories. As dusk approached we left to look for another location, but the sunset stopped us in our tracks! We jumped out of the car and started frantically shooting while the colors just kept getting more and more spectacular. Avaree kept improvising poses as we shot for over an hour. I've never seen such a prolonged and stunning sunset, and I was with a remarkable young

dancer as it happened. I'm lucky I got on that plane. Take a look at the video to see it for yourself.

13 Light as a Cloud | Jason Macdonald | New York, NY 2012

How did I get this shot? Jason did a running backflip- the slight blur of his right foot gives it away. I wanted him to levitate between the two trees so he would look like a reverse hammock. An almost impossible request, but as I learned early on, these dancers are so talented that I'm limited only by my own imagination. Jason is a member of the Parsons Dance Company. They are beautiful, strong, and fearless- a perfect combination for my needs. Jason flipped twenty-nine times and we nailed it just once, but that's all we needed.

THE ARTIST

Jordan Matter was selected as one of 2015's "Top Emerging Artists" (Art Business News) and was recently honored as one of 2017's "Top 100 Photographers on the Web" (XXLPix). His book, *Dancers Among Us* (Workman Publishing, 2012), is a *New York Times* bestseller and international phenomenon which has been reprinted eight times. "In Jordan Matter's photos, dancers make all the world their stage," wrote *The New York Times*, and Diane Sawyer praised, "breathtaking photos to free your imagination!" His critically acclaimed follow up book, *Dancers After Dark* (Workman Publishing, 2016), was featured in media throughout the world. Matter and his work have been #1 on Reddit and featured on BuzzFeed, ABC World News, the Today Show, Late Night with Seth Meyers, the Tyra Banks Show, the BBC, NPR, *The New York Times*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Oprah Magazine*, *New York Magazine*, *Cosmo*, Lincoln Center, and the Savina Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul, Korea. He is currently working on his next book, *Tiny Dancers Among Us* (Workman Publishing, 2018). Matter lives with his wife and two children in New York.

Visit www.JordanMatter.com and www.DancersAmongUs.com for more about the artist and the Dancers Among Us project!