

Mitchell

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ing on his feet — literally.

“All the floors there are raised. They’re at a slight angle so that the audience can see,” he said.

“It seems like it’s not a big deal, but all of the classrooms are raised too. To be on a floor that’s not flat when you’ve been dancing on a flat floor for 10 years is a pretty big deal, so I want to get used to that.”

His mother, former NCAA basketball coach Laura Mitchell, doubts it will be a problem.

“I think we all have a gift and it’s important to recognize it early and have a support system built around nurturing it,” she said.

As his biggest supporter, Laura has been by his side throughout his training in dance schools all over the country.

“We never made a plan B,” Laura said. “I wouldn’t allow it. I believe we should focus on being the best or why try?”

The Malibu community believed in Mitchell, too. Scholarships from the Grahek family, Steve and Karen Chase, and the Malibu Ballet Society helped Mitchell afford daily classes.

“I didn’t really start studying intensely until I was in Malibu with JoAnna Jarvis and Ballet by the Sea,” Mitchell said. “That’s where I started to learn the basics, and that was when I was 11 or 12.”

From grueling classes in the studio to time in the gym, Mitchell spends hours improving every chance he gets, but the pain of practice will not stop him.

“You’re doing exercises that build strength and they don’t feel good,” Mitchell said. “They don’t feel good when you’re doing them and they don’t feel good the next morning.”

“If you’re sore and you don’t want to work, the boy next to you is. If you’re not working as hard as he is, you’re not going to be as good as he is. You have to just deal with the pain. But there are so many things that make it all worth it.”

Working with the world’s greatest dancers and coaches has helped Mitchell stay focused on his goals.

Currently living in New York City, Mitchell has trained with Edward Ellison (his “dance father”) for the last three years and also had the opportunity to work with Gelsey Kirkland for two years, who Mitchell credits as “the most famous American ballerina of all time.”

“He has an internal drive that is unexplainable and untouchable,” Laura said.

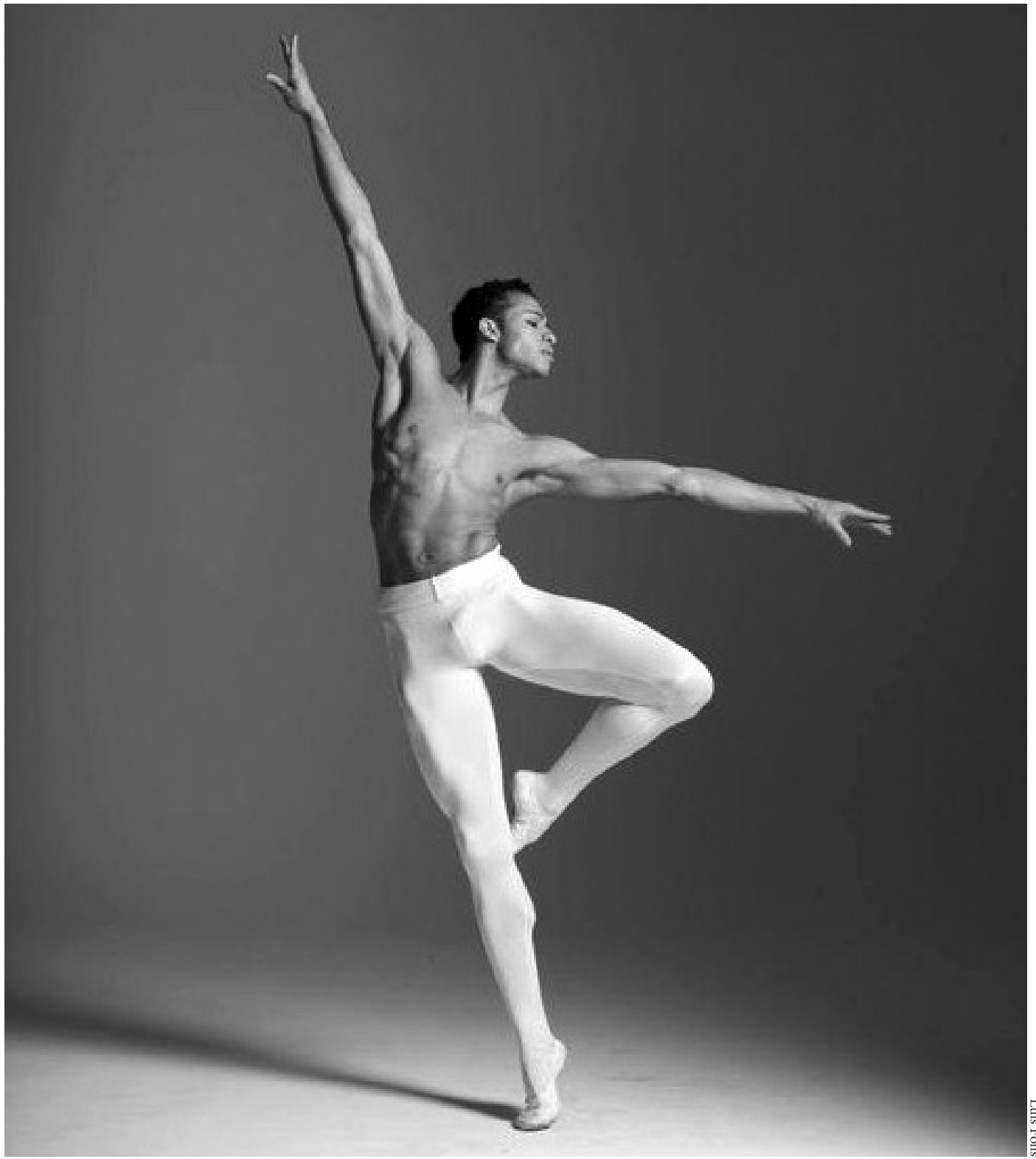
Mitchell hopes to one day give back to the community that helped propel his career.

“I would love to direct a company,” Mitchell said. “I didn’t have the most amazing financial situation. I didn’t have the luxury of private coaches. I want to make this accessible to the world.”

Fundraising efforts on his website and donations are helping Mitchell make it to Russia.

“Most cities don’t have the arts that Malibu has, and I hope that the arts in Malibu can foster even more in the future.”

Several people in the Malibu community have donated money for Mitchell to study ballet across the country and abroad in Russia.



Luis Pons

Weddle

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Courtesy of FX

“The Strain” airs Sundays on FX and follows the scientific investigation of a viral vampire strain. Above, actor David Bradley is one of the show’s stars.

Right: David Weddle has worked on other Sci-Fi shows such as “Battlestar Galactica” and “Falling Skies.”



Courtesy of David Weddle

Labyrinth”), the vampire mythology returns to its roots with vampires as monsters. Modern twists are woven in, with scientific investigation of the vampire viral strain by the Centers for Disease Control.

Weddle, who’s lived in Malibu’s Paradise Cove for the past 26 years, is a veteran writer/producer of science and sci-fi television shows that include “Star Trek: Deep Space Nine,” “Battlestar Galactica,” “CSI,” “Falling Skies” and “Defiance.”

“These vampires are not young fashionistas with relationship problems,” Weddle laughed in an interview with *The Malibu Times*, referring to popular vampire shows and movies like “True Blood” and “Twilight.”

“There’s nothing remotely attractive about these vampires. The show begins with a slow infestation of the population of New York after the head vampire lands.”

Weddle describes the show as “a vampire genre reimagined and reinvented through the incredible mind of Guillermo del Toro. This is reclaiming the origins of the genre. We take a lot of archetypes and set pieces from the mythology, like the head vampire and a vampire hunter that’s a Holocaust survivor.”

Weddle and his TV-writing partner Bradley Thompson began the campaign to win a spot on “The Strain” as soon as they heard about it last year.

“When my agent told me about del Toro’s project, I about jumped out of my seat...‘Get me on that show!’” Weddle said. “I think ‘Pan’s Labyrinth’ is a masterpiece, one of the best movies of the last 15 years, and I also love his other work. To get a chance to work with Guillermo del Toro was the whole reason we wanted to do it.”

Behind the scenes, Weddle said del Toro always has index cards and plot points ready to go when the crew of writers and producers sit down to plan episodes.

“Then he starts talking story, and he has a wonderful childlike enthusiasm.”

Weddle describes the writing product as a “television adaptation” of the book trilogy.

“It loosely follows the narrative and characters, but isn’t a

strict adaptation. It’s a creative entity on its own. We do quite a number of drafts, and our executive producer tweaks and enhances it. Del Toro does some rewriting as well. But sometimes he’s off directing a movie and can’t always be there day-to-day.”

Writing a series based on books makes it easier, Weddle said, “Because you already have a sense of the characters. It’s a fantastic foundation for a show.”

The Weddle-Thompson team wrote three of the first season’s 13 episodes. But “we work on story development for every episode, and contribute scenes, etc., except for the pilot,” Weddle said. “I was on set for a number of episodes as executive producer, watching the story and performances.”

Thompson noted that he and Weddle are very similar yet very different.

“We both went to USC and have a twisted sense of humor, but he’s a liberal from Malibu and I’m a Libertarian from Altadena,” he said. “It’s really wonderful to go into a writing room with someone you absolutely trust. David tends to be very emotional and funny. I’ll hand him a script with blank areas marked ‘put joke here.’”

Weddle said Thompson is “good on story structure, scientific sequences and action sequences,” whereas he writes more “character, psychology and quirky scenes.”

“The Strain,” “Pan’s Labyrinth” and other works of del Toro incorporate Gothic horror with fascism,” Weddle noted. “You can enjoy it as a horror story, but there are also themes about the human condition. It’s a delicious meal for the viewer.”

Prior to working in television, Weddle wrote for publications like *Rolling Stone*, *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *The San Francisco Chronicle* and *Variety*. He’s written two books, including the bio, “If They Move, Kill ‘Em! The Life and Times of Sam Peckinpah.”

No stranger to controversy, Weddle also raises the ire of film academics with articles like “What My Daughter Learned in Film School” and “Film Theory Sucks.”

“The Strain” airs Sundays at 10 p.m. on FX.