



## MATTEO

February 5, 1919 – March 24, 2011

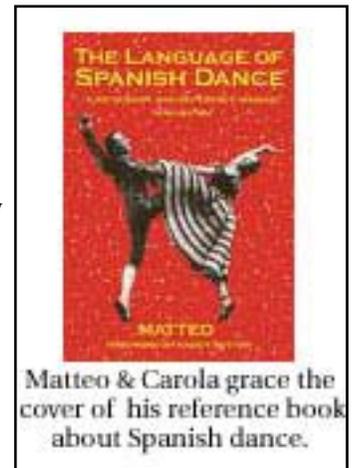
Honorary/Life Member of the Sacred Dance Guild

Matteo M. Vittucci, known professionally as Matteo, passed away March 24, 2011 at the age of 92, as result of complications from a stroke. A native and longtime resident of New York, Matteo died at the Lillian Booth Actors Home in New Jersey, where he had moved in 2008. A private interment was held. Dancer, choreographer, teacher, and scholar, Matteo was a widely respected authority on and performer of ethnic dance forms, a former faculty member at the New York High School of Performing Arts, an honorary life time member of SDG, and a deeply spiritual dancer.

Matteo joined SDG at the invitation of founding member Mary Jane Wolbers who called him a “valued faculty teacher at Guild Festivals, workshops, and master classes who promoted the Guild during his international performing tours.” During SDG Festival 1987 at Sarah Lawrence College, Matteo spoke of his affiliation with SDG as “belonging to the committee of God’s work.”

Born in Utica, New York on February 5, 1919, Matteo earned a B.S. degree from Cornell University and master’s degree in dance education from Springfield College in Massachusetts. He also studied at the Metropolitan Opera Ballet School.

In 1954, Matteo formed the Spanish dance team of “Goya and Matteo,” with partner Carola Goya (1906-1994) whom he married in 1974. The couple enjoyed a successful career on stage and television and taught regularly at the renowned Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival in Becket, Massachusetts. They appear together on the cover of Matteo’s (year) book, *The Language of Spanish Dance*, a dictionary and reference manual. Another book, *Woods That Dance*, explored the use of castanets, for which Matteo had developed a notation system.



Matteo with Mary Jane Wolbers (right), SDG founding member & her daughter Vivian Nicholl.

Matteo’s interest in traditional ethnic dances extended to other forms, particularly the classical dances of India which he studied with the celebrated American-born dancer and teacher La Meri. As a teacher at New York’s High School of Performing Arts, Matteo introduced ethnic dance forms to the curriculum. A number of his graduates went on to perform in the Indo-American dance company which Matteo and Goya had formed to present traditional cultural dances.

Matteo’s last presentation for SDG was at the 2006 Dance Legends workshop sponsored by the New York/Southwest Chapter, of which he had been a member. Chapter president Betsy O’Neill recalls, “It was an experience and privilege that I shall never forget.” In his presentation “Your Trinity Within,” Matteo explored the concept of finding the self within by way of mudras, the hand gestures of classical Indian dance. Betsy said Matteo once told her, “I always had a spiritual approach to everything I did in dance.”

New Hampshire SDG member Vivian Nicholl, daughter of Mary Jane Wolbers, remembers Matteo as “a formidable presence through the SDG years and so very deserving of

our thoughtful memorial to his contribution of time, talent, and treasure ... a true steward of the Lord’s blessings on all of us.”

[Read Matteo’s obituary in The New York Times](#)

[Memorial Service May 22 - New York City](#)