Daniel Gwirtzman, BDA ’92, artistic director of the New York-based Daniel Gwirtzman Dance Company, was in town fall semester as guest artist, teaching and choreographing a work for this year’s Power Center concert. Six feet two, Gwirtzman cuts a striking figure, carrying his long body with grace and cool. And he speaks with an eloquence that reflects the many hours he spent in English classes as a student. “I was always getting overrides from Peter [Sparling] when he was chair to take another elective,” he says.

A native of Rochester, where Garth Fagan Dance resides, Gwirtzman studied with the choreographer from an early age, while other young dance aspirants were hoofing it up in neighborhood jazz, tap, and ballet studios. As a child who was “constantly moving,” Gwirtzman found an outlet in physical expression, starting with the Israeli folk dances he learned at his temple. “There’s not one element of my life that doesn’t revolve around dance,” he says, “from what I eat, to the shoes I wear, to how I sleep.”

Immediately after graduation, Gwirtzman returned to Rochester to join Garth Fagan Dance. After two years with the company, he left the company to move to New York City, where he toured with Mark Morris and studied at the Merce Cunningham studio. But the urge to choreograph finally trumped the relative security of being part of an existing company.

“I see the world compositionally,” he says, “and I can’t turn it off.” In 1998, he founded Daniel Gwirtman Dance. Since then, he has choreographed some 90 works. The company performs year round, with an annual season at The Joyce in SoHo, and dedicates itself to educational programs in and around the City.

Gwirtzman admits that he is intentional in creating dances that are accessible to audiences. “So often, when people go to their first dance concerts, their reaction is, ‘I don’t understand; I’m afraid; I don’t get it,’” he says. “Our role is to speak articulately about the art form and to educate people. I like to give audiences a way in, a way to become engaged with what they’re seeing.”

His latest effort, Encore, takes as its conceit a production in rehearsal, preparing to tour. When the audience enters, a technician is on stage with a ladder, fiddling with the lights. Audience members were heard to whisper, “I can’t believe they’re not prepared!”

“But we’re not winking at the audience,” Gwirtzman insists. “It’s earnest. I wanted to honestly portray what a dancer’s life is about. That’s why it’s called Encore: again and again and again.”

“Encore is both the title of Gwirtzman’s new dance suite and the response it’s likely to inspire,” wrote The New Yorker. “… Executing his tricky syncopations and intricate patterns at breakneck tempos, the dancers can’t help but smile.”

Meanwhile, in Ann Arbor, Village, the work he set on dance department freshmen, “is a playful piece, inspired by stories, fairy tales, fantastic worlds.” Large volumes on Stravinsky’s life and works adorned his desk in a makeshift office at the dance building.

“Dance is a metaphor for what’s possible in life,” he says. “At the end of the day, that’s how I feel about it. To be able to move as a dancer has been a source of joy my whole life. It doesn’t end, it never fades, it only intensifies.”

Daniel Gwirtzman Dance Company’s Encores (Gwirtzman center)