

Matthew Shaffer



courtesy Young Choreographer's Festival



Tracie Stanfield's company, SynthesisDANCE performing at the 2017 Young Choreographer's Festival (Photo by Jaqi Medlock, courtesy Young Choreographer's Festival)

Choreographer and author of *So You Want To Be A Dancer*.

"Often, new choreographers feel the pressure to conform to the styles and trends in the current market. While fads are an important aspect of art and pop culture, a new choreographer should remember that it's their unique point of view that will gain attention and maintain longevity in their careers.

Remember that professional communication is essential. Often new choreographers ignore the 'business' side (responding to emails, reaching out to new venues, seeking opportunities with established festivals) and focus entirely on their choreographic work. You must find balance in doing both.

Don't try to prevent your dancers from working with other choreographers. I think that's a huge mistake. The more opportunities your dancers have to work in a variety of styles, the more perspective they can bring to your work.

Collaborate more. When we create choreography alongside our peers or established choreographers, everyone's work benefits. Healthy competition and creative exchanges help us reach new heights!

Don't overcomplicate your work. If the story demands invention, so be it; otherwise, just be clear with your content.

Finally, I've seen too many new choreographers abuse their dancers. Remember that they're emotionally sensitive artists, too. Be kind, generous, and articulate with your performers and they will be more confident taking risks with your work!"