

Michael Ballard, A Nikolais Dancer And Teacher, 49

By [Jennifer Dunning](#)

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Michael Ballard, a dancer with the companies of Murray Louis and Alwin Nikolais in the 1970's and early 1980's, died on Sunday at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis. He was 49 years old.

He died of AIDS, said Norman Ader, his companion of 25 years.

Mr. Ballard was born in Denver. His full name was Michael Ballard Podolsky, but he eventually dropped the surname. He took his first dance class as a freshman at the University of Colorado in 1960. After enrolling in summer workshops taught by Merce Cunningham, Shirley Ririe and Joan Woodbury, Mr. Ballard decided to major in dance at the University of Utah, where he came into contact with the teaching of Alwin Nikolais.

He left for New York City in 1966 to study and perform with Mr. Nikolais, whose company members also danced with Mr. Louis. Among his best-known parts were the ringmaster in "Hoopla" and the title role in "Scheherazade," both by Mr. Louis.

Moved to St. Louis

Mr. Ballard retired from the company in 1983, moving to St. Louis the next year to teach modern dance technique and choreography as an assistant professor at Washington University. He danced and choreographed there for the Washington University Dance Theater, the St. Louis Repertory Dancers and the St. Louis Dancers, for whom he staged Mr. Louis's "Bach Suite" and excerpts from other pieces.