

# The Arts

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## DANCE REVIEW

### *Leaps From Bach Variations*

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

Mark Haim, who has been showing his dances publicly since 1984, is a choreographer's choreographer. "The Goldberg Variations," the new solo he created for himself, is one man's view of Bach and it is anything but narrow.

Like Jerome Robbins, whose 1971 "Goldberg Variations" for the New York City Ballet seemed to use every repeat in Bach's score, Mr. Haim opts for the longer version of the 40-minute composition sometimes favored by pianists. And like Mr. Robbins, he studs his choreography with colloquial images whose humor or prosaic gestures are embedded within a firm formal structure.

But there the similarity ends, as was obvious in the performances that Mr. Haim gave Friday through Sunday in the Lone Stars series presented by Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church. Mr. Haim is not interested in paralleling Bach's complexities with an encyclopedic exposition of a dance lexicon. Careful not to interpret the score, he uses it as a springboard for inventing both movement and metaphor. The choreography for each variation is special to each section and recapitulation is at a minimum. Architectonics yields to imagination within form.

The aria, or theme, that frames the score's 30 variations, becomes loosely symbolic of life's journey; each variation is choreographed as a discrete episode. In the second half, Mr. Haim dances nude as if to get

back to basics before he is reminded to get on with it: someone throws him a new batch of clothes.

André Gribou, a pianist who shrewdly knows music is transformed by dance, was downstage left, not pretending to be an accompanist but a companion, the object of Mr. Haim's angry or joyful glances.

Nor was the distance between performer and viewer absolute. Mr. Haim suddenly stood still and invited do-it-yourself choreography from members of the audience, some of whom carried him to different corners of the church or twisted him into convoluted positions. Never just a gimmick, this device worked especially well at Friday night's performance. Turning the tables in the 14th variation, Mr. Haim positioned spectators into living statues before returning to the austere outlines of his overall choreography.

Yet clarity does not preclude exuberant movement. Mr. Haim, often working against the music and low to the floor, varied his dynamics; his rolls on the ground contrasted with light skips, flung-out arms and repeated bows in profile. The 15 variations performed after intermission were more narrative, as if the music's complexity suggested emotional turmoil.

In one solo, he danced with his mouth filled with water. Near the end, Bach's quodlibet, with its folk tunes, left him anything but merry. But the stateliness of the sarabande, at the close, led him into a measured exit, into peace. In all, a conceptual work realized with quiet passion.