

# Dancer floors small audience

By Sharon Christensen  
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New York-born dancer and choreographer Mark Haim addressed the audience from the darkened stage and invited them to take the stage and shape, mold, or move him as he stood motionless.

On cue, Haim welcomed the more than 60 students and faculty to participate during Friday night's performance.

"I always end up on the floor," said Haim, whose production of "The Goldberg Variations" was presented by the Odyssey Project and performed at Cal State Long Beach's Martha B. Knoebel Dance Theater Friday and Saturday night.

Forty minutes later, a dozen audience members tangled and posed Haim by placing his hands on his face and twisting his arms until finally Haim was face down on the stage floor.

A solo dance piece, choreographed and performed by Haim, "The Goldberg Variations" is named for the accompanying music, a series of 30 variations and an aria by Johann Sebastian Bach. During the two-hour work, Haim portrayed the many sides of a personality, by moving from whimsical and carefree to angry and tormented.

Accompanied by Andre Gribou, a Juilliard-trained composer, pianist and faculty member of the Ohio University School of Dance, on a piano in the corner of the stage, Haim segued from quick, staccato movements, head turns and fast footwork, to slow, creeping leg extensions as one variation moved into the next.

The second of the two acts of "The Goldberg Variations" featured Haim disco dancing to his own rhythm. Haim, seemingly lost in the music in his head, breathed into a microphone dangling from above. The audience, at first hesitantly and then raucously, laughed.

"I'm not surprised by [the laughter]," said Haim. "People are not used to going to live performances anymore. They don't know how to react," said Haim. "It's a sign they feel comfortable."

Haim said he interprets the laughter as a release for the audience.

"A lot of his witty stuff masks how technically good he is and how musically aware he is," said Robert Lou, a CSULB dance major. "It takes a lot to put on a show that long by yourself."

Gribou, who commented on Haim's musician's ability to understand the structure of the music, played constantly during the two hours, taking the 15-minute intermission as his only break.

"This piece is serious. It borders on grim," said Gribou. "By the 25th [variation] the world no longer makes any sense."