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Mark Haim and Dancers
Riverside Dance Festival
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Mark Haim's choreography is visually and viscerally striking. His ideas seem to issue from a whirlpool of pent-up aggression—yet during the process of becoming dances they often turn less than torrid. *Front Line*, a work about the terrorist activities of white-uniformed automatons, is filled with the snuffing out of individuality and humanity.

Wrapped in a strong rock beat, dancers march, do calisthenics, perform show-girl high kicks, and Lindy hop with dutiful compulsion.

Only If You Dance with Papa..., performed to Dominican and Puerto Rican merengue music, allows the dancers to drop their military stances to shimmy and shake. The most powerful work on the program was *Settings and Clearings*, an image of a dark, smoky, seamy club filled with people whose workdays are so foreign to their true natures that the evenings bring on dark and dangerous sexual tensions. Dancers perform office duties like zombies, then pound, writhe, and contort on a table, eventually throwing themselves recklessly from it as if in redemption from their lives.

Haim's movement style is bold. Dancers stalk the stage, devouring space. Yet the works often subvert dance to idea, and the choreography seems to harden into something slick and packaged for export. Occasionally, we glimpse a moment of abandon, when a dancer seems to be moving in all directions at once, legs and arms battling for supremacy. It's like cracking through the glossy surface and directly confronting Haim's talent for exciting movement.

Also on the program was *Un Petit-Pas*, a very funny short work by Danish-born Birgitte Skands. With someone else's arms substituting for a dancer's legs (which are hidden behind a box), a tiny ballerina seems to perform in place, to a Chopin waltz. While the top half dances graciously, the bottom half has more mischievous intentions. The final grand jeté is particularly hilarious—the little sylph's "legs" are so perfectly turned out and her "feet" are so carefully arched as to approach the delightfully surreal.

Karen Onoda