

# DURHAM

The Herald-Sun

## Haim combines motion, music for masterful show

By KAY McLAIN

Special to The Herald-Sun

Mark Haim uses few special effects, no props and keeps his costumes elegantly simple. But the choreographer and dancer goes all out on the music. Andre Gribou was at the piano for Haim's world premiere of "The Goldberg Variations," danced to Bach's music of the same name, Tuesday at the American Dance Festival.

Dancer and pianist perform so effortlessly together that the audience is treated to a double billing of exquisite music and extraordinary dance in this work, divided into two parts.

Audience members could have been forgiven for approaching Haim's self-proclaimed odyssey with some skepticism. Can a soloist, however good, engage us through 30 solos? Haim succeeds admirably, and he has a wonderful time doing so. It follows that his audience will catch some of that exuberance.

"The Goldberg Variations" has its light moments, but this is a serious work that

explores Haim's virtuosity and the music's demands. Whether the movements are grand and expressive or finely detailed and precise, he controls them perfectly. A compact, economical dancer, he's flexible and incredibly graceful.

There's a deliberateness to this work that allows us to grasp everything. Haim's on-the-floor work is particularly fine, especially the slow-motion sequences where he flows onto and over the stage. And this is a choreographer with a sense of humor. Toward the end of Part I, Haim gives the signal for audience members to come on-stage and move him. They surround him and position his limbs, tilt his head, and carry him shoulder-high. Then he turns the tables and poses them in an extravagant game of "Statues."

The next variation is slow, expressive and contemplative. Haim moves spar-

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### HAIM FROM C1

ingly, making every gesture count, and his deliberate movements are beautiful. There's a lovely arm gesture, stretching outward, and then the stars come out on the backdrop behind him. He melts into it and the stage is dark.

Part II opens with an expansive dance of acrobatic movements. This is followed by a playful piece where a hop, skip and smile are repeated. He runs off stage and on again, his cheeks puffed out like a hamster's. Water is the culprit, and he spouts it in a fountain.

Haim takes off shirt, pants and briefs, putting each piece neatly on the floor. He lies on top of his clothes, then rolls over and over, front to back, before curling next to them as if to sleep. He tosses the garments off stage, but when they're returned from the rafters, he gets dressed again.

He stands and gyrates his hips, gently pumps fists, and looks side to side. His feet begin to move. First one arm and then the other make tentative movements. He spins, feints and gets more daring. Down comes the mike and briefly, he's a pop star.

In one piece, he's forced to move below the banks of lights. In another, he walks into the blackness of the stage and we're left with Gribou at the piano and Bach's music — hardly a hardship.

A single note ends the work, and Haim simply walks off stage. But this is a work of consummate collaboration, and when dancer and pianist, choreographer and musician embrace, the work has truly ended.

"The Goldberg Variations" will be performed today at 8 p.m. in Reynolds Industries Theater, Duke University. Call 684-4444 for ticket information.