

# Skilled performance shows Joffrey style

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The Joffrey II Dancers are 16 in number, and they are definitely sweet.

Yet they can also project an emotional depth that belies their youth and apparent innocence.

In performance Thursday night in Texas Lutheran College's Jackson Auditorium, the Joffrey II made its first appearance in Seguin, its first venue in the San Antonio area in a good many years.

Though to the dancers it may have been just another stop on their tour, they certainly didn't give that impression. What they gave was a memorable, sensitive series of performances in a varied, colorful program.

It can be taken as a given that the dancers in this company all are highly gifted and extraordinarily well-trained because of their constant interaction with the Joffrey Ballet. What is sheer pleasure to witness, though, is the degree of maturity they display both as individual performers and as an ensemble.

That seamless sense of stage presence in movement was apparent from the first in Mark Haim's "The Gardens of Boboli," their opening number. Against the measured baroque strains excerpted from three concertos by Albinoni, the dancers played with the composer's lyric lines in a freewheeling, almost casual modernist manner.

Perhaps it would not be unfair to compare their manner of lifting and holding one another to the technique of Pilobolus, the experimental company that has redefined the line between acrobatics and dance.

After a pause, the pas de deux

## Review

from Bournonville's "Flower Festival at Genzano" continued the evening's accent on youthful emotions with a charming sense of theatricality. Marlene Kandall and Robert Conn made a fetching pair, and Kandall's breathless excitement in receiving Conn's expressions of endearment was very engaging.

But much of the thunder went to Conn in this piece for his impressive aerial terpsichore, silently landing after solid leaps and producing a nearly faultless series of midair revolutions on more than one occasion.

Yet all was not to remain sweetness and light for long in this program.

"Visitations," Matthew J. Wright's ode to adolescent passion and angst, resurrected something of the spirit of the German poet Heinrich Heine. This piece was done to a Dvorak score, adding tonal drama as well.

Shane Gregory assumed an almost satyrlike persona as principal dancer in this piece, which deals as much with the emotions of identity crisis as it does with the dynamics of an emerging adult sexuality.

After intermission, the company regaled us with a bright, upbeat bit of classicism in the form of "Grand Pas: Raymonda," being the Balanchine version of Petipa's original setting of Glazounov's score. With dancers attired in gold-embroidered red velvet costumes, this piece was a visual feast in every sense of the word.

Hopefully, we'll have a chance to see more of the Joffrey II in years to come.

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