

The Joffrey II dancers perform breathtakingly

New York based company performs at Harris Theatre

By Heidi Lamm
Special to Broadside

5582

Joffrey II, a classical company of 16 young dancers, performed at Harris Theatre for the Third Annual GMU International Arts Festival on Nov. 28th.

The student company was conceived with four purposes in mind. Since its inception in 1969, the Joffrey II Dance Company has operated as a program designed to prepare young dancers of potential to enter the Joffrey Ballet. Secondly, it provides choreographers, composers, costume and lighting designers opportunities for their works to be performed. Thirdly, it serves as a training ground for arts administrators and production personnel, and lastly, it has an extensive schedule of annual touring.

The first number performed was *The Gardens of Boboli*, a neoclassical ballet danced to music from Tommaso Albiomi. This spirited dance was performed by four men dressed in unitards and five women dressed in leotards and skirts.

Mark Haim, the choreographer of the piece, mixed contemporary angular movements with classical rounder movements. At times it was most comical to watch transitions between classical and neo-classical.

Overall, the ensemble was shaky. A few dancers fell off point, not once, but twice. Cynthia Giannini had a real

lyrical sense in her dancing. She was entertaining to watch because of her ease in performing the steps.

The pas de deux from *Flower Festival at Genzano* performed by Mary Barton and Alexander Sukonnik was enchanting. The rapport between them was especially nice. Barton was breathtaking in her balances in attitude, and Sukonnik, while a little off in his pirouettes, proved to be an excellent partner for her.

One noted dancer, Brent Phillips, showed elegance and strength in his dancing. His ability to capture the audience with his presence was extraordinary. Some dancers are born with this gift of presence on stage. Phillips especially shined in his leading role in *Passage*. This piece, set to music by Thomas Tallis, had a chorus of singers singing throughout, which added religious connotations to the dance.

The final piece performed was the *Grand Pas: Raymond*. Again Phillips had an air about him that was magnetic. His execution of jumps and turns were sharp and clean. His partner, Meg Gurin, was delightful to watch. She shined in her solo, which was flawless. The audience clearly enjoyed *Raymond* the most because of the old Marius Petipa style of dance and the classical tutus worn by the women.



Two of the sixteen highly talented Joffrey II dancers Photo by Herb Migdall