

JOFFREY PREMIERE OF HAIM'S 'GARDENS OF BOBOLI'

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Twelve years ago, in Peter Anastos' satiric "Go for Barocco," *Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo* definitively exposed the most prevalent excesses of that familiar ballet sub-genre, the plotless proto-rococo suite.

Mark Haim obviously wasn't paying attention. In his ambitious new, 23-minute *divertissement*, "The Gardens of Boboli"—danced for the first time by the Joffrey Ballet on a mixed bill Wednesday in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion—the Young American fell prey to every choreographic pitfall that Anastos had mocked and added a few miscalculations of his own.

Created for the 1986 Joffrey II Choreographer's Workshop, "Boboli"—featured literal, dogged, fussy dance equivalents of the structures found in a random assortment of sections from Tomaso Albinoni's concertos, Opus 5 and Opus 9.

Consider the antic, inane, imitative motion: Leslie Carothers waving her arms and the corps mindlessly mirroring her a moment later on the musical repeat. Why mickety-mouse a score like this? To prove the choreographer heard it more than once? We've already seen Balanchine take the concept to stratospheric levels of complexity. Who needs the comic book version in 1986?



Members of the Joffrey Ballet dance Mark Haim's new suite, "The Gardens of Boboli" at Pavilion.

In Haim's most numbing sequence, four women each balanced on one toe, ran briefly, paused again, ran again, etc., in a metric reflection of a repeating figure in the accompaniment the adagio movement of the second Opus 9 concerto.

Meanwhile, Carothers danced out the principal musical theme by alternating outward and inward turns, weighty backward leans and violent forward flings of her arms—all of this very, very busy, showy, arbitrary and labored.

As a modern-dance choreographer venturing his first pointe-ballet, Haim also incorporated irrelevant, anything-can-be-a-motif

Jonathan McPhee conducted a crisp, transparent performance of the music. Even Haim won at least one technical victory—his use of pointe-work looked absolutely fluent. Unfortunately, his combination of classical and modern vocabularies never resulted in a persuasive, organic style and often looked positively and needlessly desperate.

Albinoni, after all, reconciled conservative forms and the vitality of a new era without succumbing to the manic schizophrenic style that Haim cultivated—and the 16th-Century park-like area in Florence that gave this ballet its title also managed to incorporate contrasting components without forfeiting its prevailing sense of harmony.

Ultimately, however, Haim appeared more intent on making an impression than making a coherent dance statement. His ballet may have used the Boboli garden in its title, but it remained far closer to the Madison Square one in its penchant for knockout effects.

Completing the program: Paul Taylor's "Cloven Kindom" and Gerald Arpino's "Birthday Variations" and "Round of Angels," all danced by familiar casts.

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