

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 1987

Dance: The Haim Company

WALTER TERRY once suggested that dance critics ought to try writing reviews without adjectives. There were adjectives all over the place in a program presented by Mark Haim and Dancers on Thursday at the Theater of the Riverside Church. There were also ideas. But one longed at times to get Mr. Haim into a room without a single striking lighting or scenic effect, antic bit of soundscore, rubber face or funny walk at his disposal and see what the results would be.

The four dances on the Riverside program had a sure and confident touch, and were brightly performed by Mr. Haim's lively young company. The audience cheered its approval. And Mr. Haim is certainly not alone in his use of gimmicks, which seem to be the fundamental element in the work of a new generation of modern-dance choreographers now moving onto the scene. But eventually one longed for something more — or less.

"Blood Memory," a work created this year for William Forsythe's Frankfurt Ballet, began extremely promisingly. Set to rich and vigorous African traditional chants, the dance occurred on a stage partitioned into halves. In one small half, men and women move together, nearly silhouetted in dim light. In the larger half, a pretty young woman glides and dreams languidly in a swing while an older woman stares away into space.

But the dimensions of the two worlds gradually shift until the two women are squeezed out and incorporated into the larger world of that faceless, shifting mass of dancers. "Blood Memory" seems, refreshingly, to be an attempt to deal with the question of apartheid in South Africa. But Mr. Haim has created so strong a picture of a divided world that one is unprepared for the dance's final emotionally uncommitted moments.

Mr. Haim's new "Backwards Lawn," performed to music by Mozart, is an atmospheric though contrived dance for friends and lovers on some long-ago dusky evening. "Fast Forward," set to a Handel score, is a joke for one small, round female and a line of much more formal men. The program was completed by Mr. Haim's new "Stiff Upper Lip," danced to a score composed by the choreographer and Joe Diehl. It seems to be the pot into which Mr. Haim has tossed an entire repertory of gags, some of which are mildly offensive and last for irritating lengths of time.

Natalie Rogers stood out here for her strong dramatic presence, and Megan Williams was the dance's charming soubrette. The company also included the stylish Timothy Cronin and Doug Bender, Caroline Billings, Laura Colby, David Fox, Mr. Haim, Nadine Mose, Craig A. Patterson, Barrie Raffel and Yloy Ybarra.

JENNIFER DUNNING

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