

Ballet: Haim's 'Gardens' in Premiere

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

THE Joffrey Ballet's latest local premiere, "The Gardens of Boboli," is by a young and relatively unknown choreographer, Mark Haim. And like some youthful talents that Robert Joffrey, the company's director, has previously sought out, he shows considerable potential.

No, this is not a critic's code word to talk about an actual failure. In this case, it means what it says. Mr. Haim, as his ballet proved Tuesday night at the City Center, is a choreographer to watch in the future.

As far as the present goes, "The Gardens of Boboli" demonstrates that Mr. Haim is much better at dance structures than at thinking up the steps, movements and combinations to fill up those structures. He is clever and assured in his skills, but his ballet, set to sections of two concertos by Albinoni, is literally less than memorable. And ironically, this may stem from the very gift that allows Mr. Haim to set up patterns of dancers — and then erase them so swiftly that one cannot retain the intricacies onstage long enough to absorb them.

Paul Taylor's "Mercuric Tidings" comes to mind as the kind of ballet Mr. Haim might have had as a successful model. Unlike Mr. Taylor, he puts his women in toe shoes, but he understands the kind of classicism a Taylor work can marry to a modern-dance mentality. There is even a touch of Taylorism in the dancers' curved or swinging arms, the contrast between elegant and humorous body shapes.

Like Mr. Taylor, Mr. Haim attended Juilliard — he is a 1983 graduate. He also studied ballet at the Joffrey's school, but his own company is a modern-dance troupe. The fact that he has a diploma in piano study from the Manhattan School of Music might account for the sophistication of his analytic view of the music in this ballet. The score consists of various movements from Albinoni's *Concerti a Cinque*, (Op. 5 and Op. 9). Played out of order, the excerpts are used mainly for adagio and allegro contrast in the dancing, with two adagio movements unpredictably placed in the center.

The ballet, created originally this year for the Joffrey II workshop directed by Richard Englund, acquired a title referring to the Boboli Gardens in Florence — a fact that may be irrelevant except for the Italian nationality of the composer.

The Program

THE GARDENS OF BOBOLI, (New York Premiere), choreography, Mark Haim; music, Tommaso Albinoni; costumes, Sally Ann Parsons; lighting, Penelope Curry. **WITH:** Leslie Carothers, Parrish Maynard, Peter Narbutas, Roger Plaut, Tyler Walters, and company. Presented by the Joffrey Ballet at the City Center 55th Street Theater.



Herbert Migdoll

Leslie Carothers and Tyler Walters in the Joffrey Ballet's production of "The Gardens of Boboli."

After a bouncy overture, Leslie Carothers and Tyler Walters open the first section in some trick partnering that introduces the flavor of the choreography. This turns out to be effect-for-effect's sake. It is a style seen at its best next when Miss Carothers leads the ensemble, which has four women and four men, including Mr. Walters. Victoria Pasquale, a very brilliant dancer, takes over the lead in this quick section, which has the dancers occasionally playfully changing positions while sitting on the floor.

The interest is really in how two units of dancers overlap and the occasional spliced-in surprise — Miss Pasquale suddenly spurts up two feet flexed in a shuffle-step never to be completed. Parrish Maynard, Peter Narbutas and Roger Plaut then work themselves into gymnastic groupings (a man carried in between two others) that are comparatively simplistic.

These are followed by a square of women with Miss Carothers the outsider, or as the center of the pattern — and then a jester-like solo for Mr. Maynard. The sixth section, for all nine dancers (the cast also includes Jennifer Habig, Elizabeth Parkinson and Lauren Rouse), plays upon this odd number of dancers, uses heel clicking and leaps, and finally leaves Miss Carothers alone, resting on her knees. The costumes, by Sally Ann

Parsons, further the notion that this is a ballet for young dancers. Jonathan McPhee conducted.

A lesson in how to be sophisticated by appearing to be childlike was provided by the season's first performance of Jean Cocteau's 1917 brainchild, "Parade." Carole Valleskey stood out in her clarity as the Little American Girl in Léonide Massine's choreographic collage of pantomime gestures that recall everyone from Charlie Chaplin to Tom Mix. Philip Jerry's Chinese Conjurer had a bountiful spring, a mysterious intensity. Deborah Dawn and Tom Mossbrucker had the wistfulness but not the projection of Picasso — like acrobats. The sideshow managers in Cubist constructions — Kirby Hade and Mark Wuest — danced exceptionally well in ungrateful parts. It isn't much fun to be encased in a box, even one designed by Picasso. The Cubist horse, danced by Randall Graham and John Sheaffer, had a tendency toward scene-stealing. The production as a whole now seems to have too many idiosyncratic mannerisms.

By contrast, Glenn Edgerton was properly streamlined as the romantic partner to Dawn Caccamo in Gerald Arpino's "Secret Places" — a 60's-style miniature to some well-chosen Mozart that has worn gracefully.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1986

The New York Times