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BURRELLE'S

## Joffrey II Dancers charming, graceful in UTC performance

By Nikki C. Hasden  
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An experimental teaching arm and proving ground for young dancers and choreographers alike, the Joffrey II Dancers, apprentice company of the famed Joffrey Ballet, began its fall tour Thursday evening with the first of two scheduled programs at the UTC Fine Arts Center.

The company's charming and engaging performance, part of UTC's Dorothy Patten Fine Arts Series, included excerpts from ballets which are part of the standard classical ballet repertoire, as well as newer works in neo-classical style. A substantial crowd was enthralled with these new or rarely encountered works and by the remarkable agility and grace of these very young dancers. But they may have been somewhat disappointed that one of the company's most prominent dancers, Meg Gurin, who is scheduled to move up to the main company in a few months, was sidelined by illness and unable to perform Thursday.

Reportedly recuperating from the flu, Ms. Gurin may possibly dance in tonight's concluding UTC performance (which begins at 8). At any rate, the principal dancers for the various selections will be rotated within the company, as is standard practice.

By far the most exciting ballet on the entire program was *The Gardens of Boboli*, a magical and thoroughly ingratiating work of perpetual motion that filled one with visions of perfumed gardens and innocent romance without use of any stage setting.

Performed to music of Baroque composer Tommaso Albinoni, the choreography by Mark Haim grew from a classically-oriented base to include stark, staccatoed and angular movements, such as abrupt leaps and carries and passages that looked like gymnastics in very slow motion. Most of the sections of the dance were happily upbeat, the participants prancing about (mostly in perfect synchronization) like little sprites. But one section, where three men dancers performed variations of

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### Review

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classical steps usually executed by women, was extremely powerful and provocative, although almost too personal and a little shocking.

Outstanding in this ballet was Joseph Schnell, who began like a strutting and jiggling jester and then seemed to imitate discus throwers and other athletes in a spectacular solo.

The other relatively new dance, *Passage* choreographed by James Kudelka, took its inspiration from the heavenly sound of the early 17th century Thomas Tallis motet, *Spem in alium*, written in eight parts for 40 voices. A work with endless interpretive possibilities, it centered around the scantily-clad body of dancer Brent Phillips, and seemed to have heavy overtones of Christian theology, perhaps incorporating the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Not all the dancers in this number seemed to turn in peak performances, and the work was not as emotionally effective as it could have been, but it was still fascinating and totally unexpected.

Also on the program were the lovely, enchanting *Pas de Deux* from *Flower Festival in Genzano*, in which the sweetness of the ballerina, danced by Mary Barton, was set off by the virtuosity and exuberance of the male dancer, Alexander Sukonnik; and *Grand Pas: Raymonda*, associate director Jeremy Blanton's staging of the Hungarian-flavored divertissement from Act III of the now-seldom-performed ballet. The former was choreographed by August Bournonville, the father of the Danish ballet, and featured movements in the Romantic style, while the latter, which featured Johanna Snyder and Adam Sklute and employed the whole company, was danced to original choreography by the famous choreographer Marius Petipa.

The audience was delighted with the escapades of the dancers in these works, although in the latter, especially, movements were not always perfection.

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