

# Dancers, directors prove themselves in Joffrey II

By Emily McDonald  
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The Joffrey II Dancers provides a proving ground for choreographers as well as for dancers, says Richard Englund, director of the company.

"Just as we are with dancers, we are the beginning for many choreographers as well," Englund said in an interview by telephone from New York.

The Joffrey II Dancers will perform Nov. 6-7 at the UTC Fine Arts Center as part of the Dorothy Patten Fine Arts Series.

A work the company will perform in Chattanooga, *The Gardens of Boboli*, was choreographed by Mark Hahn for the Joffrey II.

"We asked Mark to do a work for us," Englund said. "It was his first ballet en pointe for ballet dancers. It was very, very successful. It is a wonderful, eclectic mix of modern and ballet."

Joffrey II premiered the work in Maine, and the main Joffrey company presented a West Coast premiere in Los Angeles.

*Passage*, also to be performed here, was choreographed by James Kudelka. The piece was originally presented in a ballet workshop, then taken into the Joffrey repertoire.

"That resulted in several ballets for us," Englund said. "Next year he will be participating in the Winter Olympics in Canada and will do a commissioned work for those programs."

The Joffrey II Dancers was formed 18 years ago and developed from the Joffrey School's apprentice program. The late Lillian Moore came up with plans

that turned into a second company, and Jonathan Watus became founding director.

The Joffrey had toured extensively, but more and more smaller cities were removed from the schedule because of cost and travel problems. The smaller cities felt they were part of the Joffrey's development and didn't want to be excluded. The Joffrey II company was established to maintain contact with those communities, Englund said.

In addition, the National Endowment for the Arts began providing grants to the Joffrey and Joffrey II companies, and it became important that most of the country have the opportunity to see what the grants support. The Joffrey is locked into performing in major cities, and the company's most successful dancers are less available to the country at large. Therefore, the Joffrey II Dancers makes dance available to more taxpayers.

"The differences are fairly slight," said Englund. "The key difference for Joffrey II is that they are primarily young dancers. It's a transition company to give dancers experience, so when they go into a full-scale company like the Joffrey they are ready with their discipline and technical skills."

The Joffrey II Dancers has a variety of dance styles essential to make the Joffrey company. Meg Gurin, a dancer who will be coming with the Joffrey II Dancers to Chattanooga, has signed a contract to dance with the main Joffrey company beginning in January.

The Joffrey II group regularly functions with 16 to 18 dancers, and 12 dancers generally go out on tour.

"We rarely perform pieces with more than a cast of 10," Englund said, "but on our Southeast tour, which Chattanooga starts, we will be carrying 16. There are some wonderful dancers who are technically apprentices, and they will get the opportunity to perform."

The Joffrey organization is centered in New York, but other cities are associated with the Joffrey, too. One of these cities is San Antonio, Texas, where a Joffrey workshop is located.

Englund said: "The workshop started in Galveston and moved to Chicago and then San Antonio. San Antonio has a mayor who has been supportive of the Joffrey and all the arts. It is an interesting city ethnically and has a great excitement to it. It has always responded to the Joffrey there. When it was necessary to examine how the workshop was funded, they responded most of all the cities approached."

The Joffrey is located at Incarnate College in San Antonio, and dancers as young as 12 or 13 participate and are identified for future involvement in the Joffrey in New York. More than 80 percent of the Joffrey and of Joffrey II have come through San Antonio.

The Joffrey presents a season in Los Angeles as well as in New York, and the ballet also has a long association with Iowa City. The Joffrey is adding *The Nutcracker* to its repertoire, and the ballet will be staged in New York, premiered first in Iowa City and then in Los Angeles.

The Joffrey II Dancers will conduct a master class Nov. 5 in Chattanooga under the sponsorship of the Chattanooga Ballet.

"On this tour we have a great deal of master classes," Englund said. "There is a lot of ballet training and a number of regional and professional ballet companies around the country, and it is important for companies like the Joffrey to stay in communication with them."

"We offer things we have found to be very crucial to being a performing dancer. While techniques are aimed at the performer, they are not always taught that way."

Englund was named director of the Joffrey II Dancers in 1985 and came to the position after 13 years as founder/director of American Ballet Theater II. When he assumed the directorship the Joffrey company was very much involved with full-length and classical ballets, and Englund was asked to take that direction with the Joffrey II Dancers.

The Joffrey program will also include the *Pas de Deux* from *Flower Festival at Genzano*, a work Englund terms a beautiful dramatic ballet, and *Grand Pas: Raymond*. The latter is everybody's idea of what ballet looks like, he said and is an example of Joffrey II's commitment to providing variety in its programming.

● IF YOU'RE GOING:

The Joffrey II Dancers will perform Nov. 6 and 7 at 8 p.m. in the Roland Hayes Concert Hall of the UTC Fine Arts Center. Call 756-4269 for ticket information.