

INDEPENDENT

WEEKLY

ADF spotlight

Mark Haim

Mark Haim presented, for the first time in its entirety, his dance version of Johann Sebastian Bach's *The Goldberg Variations* at the ADF last Tuesday and Wednesday. The effect was sheer delight.

The 80-minute dance piece, broken into two parts with an intermission, consisted of 30 solos, each one ranging in length from one to 10 minutes. Haim, a dance graduate of New York's Juilliard School and a pianist by childhood training, spent the last three years choreographing his responses to the famous keyboard work, originally published by Bach in 1742.

Haim appeared in flowing black pants and shirt, with white undergarments in the first part and red ones in the second. His performance offered the audience not only a visual experience of the music, played by pianist André Gribou, but a playful exegesis of the shifting values within each variation. It

was a performance at once inventive, referential and comic.

Loving attention to detail best defined the work. This was true whether Haim executed a perfect *battement*, imitated a rock 'n' roll singer or offered some post-modern flourish. He explored the conventions of dance and theater, offering the audience pleasing, telling glimpses into the nature of art and his muse. Before intermission, he invited audience members on stage to place him in new positions. Amusingly, they obliged.

In a later interview, Haim said his *Goldberg Variations* began as small studio pieces for the pleasure of his friends: "I'm a complete Bach nut. I just adore his music. In a way, it's very, very formal, and it's very closed."

What drove him to make *The Goldberg Variations*, he said, was a late-night confrontation on Eighth Avenue in New York. Threading his way through small gangs of kids, he feared being caught in gunfire. Imagining himself dying on the street, Haim discovered he had one regret. He had never made those Bach solos. Now he has created his own aria, one that sings of dance.

—Linda Haac

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