

Joffrey II's rising stars are dazzlers

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Joffrey II made headlines several years ago when Ron Reagan Jr. joined the New York-based dance troupe.

But a few years ago, the First Son jetted to *Playboy* magazine to write and ABC to be a network feature reporter.

Today, the roster of dancers may lack the name clout of a *Who's Who* in dance, but nevertheless, the 14 members of the "farm team" of the Joffrey Ballet are making a name for themselves.

A few to watch:

- Cynthia Giannini — sylph-like.
- Joseph Schnell — forceful.
- Brent Phillips — powerful.

Joffrey II director Richard Englund led his talented troupe in a varied four-part program Thursday at Samford University's Wright Theater that ran the gamut from classical and neo-classical ballet to modern and contemporary dance.

Englund is a former director of the now-defunct Birmingham Civic Ballet and married one of its brightest stars, Birmingham native Gage Bush.

The two crowd-pleasing numbers of the pitifully small but very appreciative audience were "Passage" and "Grand Pas: Raymonda."

In "Passage" there was drama throughout — in the dancing, lighting and costumes.

Brent Phillips was the powerful magnet that drew the dancers. Clad in a loin cloth, he was bathed in dramatic overhead lighting with the backdrop alternating in red and green.

He exerted his magnetism and the dancers responded by flitting in and out of his powerful web to the strains of music (taped) from eight choirs for a total of 400 voices.

In "Grand Pas: Raymonda," Englund showcased 10 dancers.

The number featured choreography by Petipa, and Cynthia Giannini and Brent Phillips were the embodiment of its classical style with their crisp footwork and fluid movements.

Giannini's arm movements were ever so graceful with their gentle fluttering.



Photo special to The News

Joffrey II's Flower Festival at Genzane pas de deux

Dance Review

JOFFREY II. Performed at Wright Concert Hall as part of the Samford University Star Series. On the program: Grand Pas: Raymonda.....dancers Pas de deux from "Flower Festival at Genzane".....dancers Passage.....dancers The Gardens of Boboli.....dancers Directed by Richard Englund

The gold and red costumes added to the richness of the Spanish-flavored number.

In "The Gardens of Boboli and the pas de deux from "Flower Festival at Genzane," Joseph Schnell excelled.

Schnell was joined by Robert Conn and Shane Gregory in "The Gardens," a number that demanded both balletic techniques and pyrotechnics. The trio were both graceful with their pliable movements and athletic for the acrobatic-type work.

The ensemble did some dazzling footwork *a la* Fred Astaire as members moved what appeared to be effortlessly across the stage.

Romance was the theme of "Flower

Festival" which featured Mary Barton and Schnell.

Dressed in a bright pink and black peasant dress to Schnell's black toreador-style pants and white shirt with pink scarf, Barton was ever so coquettish and flirty with her able partner.

Englund used the choreography from August Bournonville, father of Danish ballet who is known for his romantic style of ballet.

Englund was named director of Joffrey II two years ago.

Robert Joffrey and Englund hand-pick the dancers for Joffrey II.

Joffrey founded the company in 1969. It serves to prepare young dancers to enter the Joffrey Ballet; offers aspiring choreographers, composers, costume and lighting designers a vehicle for their works; is a training ground for arts administrators and production personnel; and for communities unable to support a large dance company, it affords them the opportunity to view professionals and future stars of the Joffrey.