

Exuberant Joffrey II dancers win more friends to ballet

By Paul Hollinger
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Considering the casual superfluity of much of American pop culture today, it is both refreshing and comforting to observe performances by a group such as the Joffrey II Dancers, who performed here last Friday and Saturday. As the concluding offering of this season's Lawrence Artist Series, the company gave an exhilarating accounting of the talent, imagination and hard work that it represents as the feeder group of the better known Joffrey Ballet.

Wisely rescheduled for Stansbury Theater instead of the Chapel, the production capitalized on the flexible lighting system and quality audio equipment of the newer hall. Though the low seats did not afford much opportunity to follow the foot patterns,

the smaller hall added intimacy and visual details that enhanced the total effect.

A feeling of youthfulness pervaded the entire performance, a perky, almost adolescent exuberance being established in The Gardens of Boboli, the dancers' opening number. Based on the bright, crisp, predictable baroque patterns of Albinoni's orchestral music, the first selection was a curious combination of traditional elements, as music of this period would suggest, and more contemporary whimsy, treading on the fine line between the refreshing and the disconcerting. A contrasting slow movement, featuring male dancers Ahmed, Conn and Gardner in a breathtaking exhibit of acrobatic strength and control, was a case in point. Personally, I liked it.

A pas de deux from Helsted's Flower Festival at Genzano offered every opportunity for awkwardness

ful costumes, and a big orchestral sound served as a fitting finale, featuring Lissette Salgado and Adam Sklute along with strong solo and duo passages by others in the company.

Though individuals did stand out (Tracey Sartorio's compelling role in the opener comes to mind), the program was not designed to be a star vehicle. Of the 16 dancers listed, almost all must have had their opportunities in solo or duo roles.

An interesting and moving evening, in the youth and enthusiasm of the dancers it gave one a promising feeling for the future.

Review

or loss of control, but even in the second performance of the day Robert Conn and substitute Maia Wilkins met its demands in a polished performance with no hint of the tension underlying its careful moves.

A more subdued and moody Visitation, based on violin-piano music of Dvorak, featured Philip Gardner and four of the women of the company, setting off the more brilliant excerpts from Glazounov's Raymonda which concluded the program. Here full lighting, rich color-

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