

Joffrey II Dancers Open Festival Series At Bowling Green

Toledo Blade

Toledo, Ohio
October 8, 1986

The Gardens of Boboli
Choreography: Mark Haim
Music: Albinoni
Pas de Deux from Flower Festival at
Genzano
Choreography: Bourfonville
Music: Gade, Heisted, Pauli
Cynthia Giannini & Alexander Sukonnik
Passage
Choreography: James Kudatka
Music: Tallis
Brent Phillips & Ensemble
Grand Pas: Raymonda
Choreography: Petia
Music: Glazounoff
Meg Gurin & Brent Phillips
The Joffrey II Dancers
Richard Englund, director
Jeremy Blanton, associate director
Dancers: Mary Barton, Robert Conn, Cynthia
Giannini, Shane Gregory, Meg Gurin, Monique
Irish, Marlene Kendall, Jennifer Mattingly, Brent
Phillips, Lissette Salgado, Tracey Sartorio, Jo-
seph Schnell, Adam Skula, Jphanna Seyder,
Alexander Sukonnik, and Cary Zaleski.

By **BORIS NELSON**

Blade Music Editor

There were several surprises, all pleasant, at last night's opening of the 1986-87 Festival Series at Bowling Green State University's Kobacker Hall. First, Kobacker was filled to capacity — for once. May this augur well for the entire season. Second, there were both students and young people in the audience besides the regulars.

And third, The Joffrey II Dancers although a very young company — none of its members has been with this ensemble for more than just two years — surprised with some of its dancing which deserves better than the "II" that is attached to it.

The Joffrey II dancers range in age from 16 to 22, and they were chosen for what they displayed last night: their potential. The goal: to enter the Joffrey I company, and we are told that about 80 per cent of some 270 dancers who have participated in the Joffrey II program have gone on and become members of Joffrey I.

Discipline And Exuberance

All of these young dancers had early training and previous experience, and they hail from Arkansas to New York, Florida to California, Texas to Maine, Pennsylvania and — believe it — Kiev, Russia.

And what they lack in age, i.e. the final something that comes only with more years of work and performance, they make up with an already well-noticeable flair, individuality, and youthful exuberance. Disciplined they are, and every time another Joffrey II passes through here, we can note the increasing quality of their preparation and execution.

There was some very good ensemble work in the opening ballet where the ensemble of nine dancers broke into soli and duets as well as ensemble dancing and did very well by it. Within the classical concepts, there was a good sense of humor at the proper time and some sudden modernisms which never intruded but added spice to the work, very charmingly choreographed by Mark Haim.

Professionally Executed Solo

Toni Lander staged the Pas de Deux from Flower Festival and came up with some very innovative ideas. Even if there was need for an occasional cover or re-cover in the proceedings, the two soloists handled it professionally. There was a nice rapport and much of it was executed with considerable refinement, but not all of it is as yet fully set. It will come, to be sure.

Passage to Thomas Tallis' 40-part motet "Spem in alium" (c. 1605) was very inventive, in a more contemporary vein and programmatic enough to interpret it in many ways, and it was danced with a great deal of empathy. Brent Phillips in the lead was excellent and the five other dancers once again in solo bits and various combinations danced their roles very well indeed. Like the music, it is constantly in motion with the interplay never confusing to eye or ear.

The dances from Raymonda were staged by Jeremy Blanton, one of the dancers, and he knew what he wanted. These are courtly dances full of elegance and Hungarian dances full of spice and that special dignity. Meg Gurin and Brent Phillips took the honors in the solo roles, and the ensemble of eight dancers also deserved the hearty and prolonged applause. The music was taped and played back at a comfortable level. Joffrey II has come a long way in dramatic sense, stage presence, and professionalism.