



Photo by Kathy Sauber

Artist in residence Mark Haim works with Kristen Daley, a graduate student who will be performing his dance for the Faculty Dance Concert March 5-9.

Opera is inspiration for new dance

Thursday, February 22, 2003

Next week's Faculty Dance Concert will offer a new interpretation of a scene from one of the world's great operas.

Mark Haim, artist in residence in the Dance Program, has worked with graduate student Kristen Daley to interpret a portion of *Don Giovanni*, by Mozart, the story of a lecherous Spanish nobleman.

"*Don Giovanni* was my introduction to opera. It was the first opera I truly enjoyed," says Haim, who teaches dance classes in both technique and composition. "I chose this music and wanted to work with Kristen, whom I've known for several years in New York. She's a beautiful performer. We've worked hard for the past few weeks to put something together."

In a style of choreography that he has

developed over the past 20 years, Haim approaches a new piece without any preconceptions. "I like to watch the dancer move and then decide what strikes me as relevant or evocative.

The portion of the opera from which Haim has drawn is filled with what he calls "amplified passion." It is the scene where a Spanish noblewoman realizes that the man who is greeting her is none other than the Don who attempted to rape her, and killed her father.

"The dance is not a translation of the story," Haim says. "It does not have a narrative, but is about communicating the feeling of the opera. Oddly enough, despite the feelings of anger and shock at what has happened, I feel an underlying lightness to the passage." The dance plays on those dualities and emotional contrasts.

Haim employs the same organic approach to dance in his UW classes as he does in his professional work. "Much of my teaching in New York has been in classes that run three or four weeks, or in open classes with a wide range of abilities. Now I'm having to think about teaching in a longer term setting. It's interesting to observe students' aesthetics changing over the quarter. I'm learning how to encourage students, without imposing on them my preconceived goals for their achievements. I've come to realize that all students will achieve, but perhaps not in way that I envision their future."

Whether in the professional setting or the classroom, Haim works to bring something out of performers that they may not know they possess. "I like to push dancers to bring out something they may not know is there, to expand their awareness of their own capabilities. I treat students like members of a professional dance company and assume they will rise to the challenge."

While teaching at the UW under a two-year contract, Haim continues to perform around the country. He recently performed his *Goldberg Variations* in

Hattiesburg, Miss., a dance for which he is renowned and has been appreciated by audiences in New York, Washington, D.C., Russia, Korea and elsewhere. Haim also is offering dance experiences to young people at 15 schools in upstate New York. "I love working with elementary students," he says.

In his spare time, Haim sings with the Seattle Men's Chorus. So, does he feel like an exile, having left New York after 20 years? "Once you realize that there is nowhere else in the world like New York, then you can get over it. I used to travel five to seven months a year. I wanted a life that was more settled. Seattle has a ballet, a symphony orchestra, and opera. I appreciate the city and its natural beauty."

The Faculty Dance Concert will be held at 8 p.m. March 5-8 and 2 p.m. March 9. It will include four premieres and choreography by Peter Kyle, Matthew Nash, Jennifer Salk, Hannah C. Wiley, and Haim, with performance by UW faculty and students. Tickets are \$9 for adults, \$7 for students and senior. For tickets, call the UW Arts Ticket Office, 543-4880.

—BOB ROSETH