Skillful company of Joffrey Ballet illuminates Jones Hall

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One of America's great ballet companies, the City Center Joffrey Ballet, performed before a near capacity crowd at the newly opened Jones Hall, on Thursday, Oct. 6. The opening ballet "Olympics" was a brilliant portrayal of the main olympic sports. The grace and rhythm of the archer, wrestler, swimmer, diver, hammer thrower, sprinter and high jumper were captured by a group of eleven male dancers.

The ballet ended with the olympic torch bearer, Luis Fuente, leading all the contestants in their last efforts to reach the torch, symbol of their highest aspirations.

Vivaldi

The second ballet, "Viva Vivaldi," was an interesting fusion of traditional and modern ballet. The music of Antonio Vivaldi dominated and even controlled the movement of this ballet.

After a short intermission the spectators, ranging in age from 3 to 80, returned to their red velvet seats to watch the most delightful number of the evening, "Sea Shadow," superbly performed by Lisa Bradley and Richard Gain.

Beauty and Strength

Against a dark blue backdrop and a simple seaside landscape, the ballet dramatically opened without a movement on stage: a young man slowly aroused by the morning sun performed a striking dance and motion study of awakening. Soon he fell back to sleep only to be awakened by the beautiful and sensuous sea nymph.

From this time on the ballet became an expression of the beauty of man and woman. The dancers flow through the movements of awakening, courtship, seduction and departure with such skill and grace that they overwhelmingly justified the trend of the modern ballet to emphasize the beauty and strength of the entire human body.

Liquid Motions

This ballet called for slow and graceful motions during the awakenings, as well as for strength in the constant flow of motion of the courtship dance around the shore. Especially demanding for the male dancer was the departure dance into the sea, performed in a double arch on the floor with the couple's arms and legs in the air as if propelling themselves through liquid space.

The concluding ballet was "Cakewalk," a humorous portrayal of a riverboat society, strictly Southern Style. Gaily costumed, 25 dancers poked fun at other dance forms: to the tune of the wallflower waltz Miss Clear enchanted three magicians in colorful capes who protected her from the villainous riverboat gambler (Maximiliano Zanosia).

The audience was fully entertained by the fantastic and joyous rhythm of this ballet and laughter for the first time tickled the sensitive walls of Jones Hall.

The next ballet in Jones Hall will be the Ballet Folklorico, October 19-22 and if its dancers are as skilled as those of the Joffrey Ballet, they will offer another thrilling evening to Houston ballet fans.