

CITY BALLET: DOUBLE BILL, BALANCHINE AND ROBBINS

By JACK ANDERSON

Published: May 15, 1986

JEROME ROBBINS'S "Goldberg Variations" and George Balanchine's "Who Cares?" - two long, choreographically rich works - shared the New York City Ballet's program on Tuesday night at the New York State Theater.

Mr. Robbins's ballet to Bach contrasts formality and informality, convention and fancifulness. The tone is set at the beginning when two elegant courtiers appear in an evocation of an 18th-century dance. But they are succeeded by an ensemble in contemporary practice costumes.

As the aristocrats, Diana White and Alexandre Proia were suitably dignified. Yet they should avoid making their hand gestures so fussy as to seem affected.

The ensembles that followed their little duet suggested young people at play and dancers rehearsing in a studio. But these gave way to ostentatiously brilliant variations for a whole new ensemble. Both ensembles were led by six soloists, the first group consisting of two women and four men, the second of three women and three men. If the second arrangement permitted displays of intimacy, it also corresponded to balletic conventions of the classical pas de deux. Thus, once again, Mr. Robbins balanced formality and informality.

Melinda Roy and Roma Sosenko, the featured women in the first group of soloists, were nicely paired. Miss Roy made movements expansive and her dancing proceeded in gusts of energy, while Miss Sosenko was delicate without becoming finicky. Their fine male companions were Peter Boal, [Paul Boos](#), Peter Frame and Kipling Houston.

The three couples in the ballet's second half were equally praiseworthy. Kyra Nichols and Sean Lavery were delightful in a fleet duet containing steps that were often mirror images of one another. Performing a slow duet to fast music, Stephanie Saland and Jock Soto made time stand still. Yet Mr. Soto demonstrated that, when the choreography required it, he could speed through a solo with brio. David Otto, making his debut, carefully partnered Maria Calegari in a duet in which she twisted about him. However, he looked somewhat cautious in a later solo.

Set to arrangements of Gershwin songs, "Who Cares?" also has two parts. The cheerful group dances in the first sometimes resemble chorus numbers in Broadway musicals and at other times bring to mind the patterns of pedestrians in the street. However, the ballet's finest choreography is in some solos and duets for three women and a man.

Patricia McBride was a glamorous woman of the world. Victoria Hall was carefree and something of a flirt. Miss Calegari moved more quietly, yet she revealed that her reticence resulted from good breeding rather than shyness. Mr. Lavery was simultaneously at ease and in high spirits.

In addition to challenging the dancers, the two ballets challenged Jerry Zimmerman, the capable piano soloist in both. Robert Irving conducted.