

Ohad Naharin is the uncontested genius of modern Israeli dance. Director of the Bat Sheva dance company since 1990, now the sixtyish-so director who has taken the company to great renomee in the world, has decided to step down and stay on as consultant.

Bone wear and back pain beside, he has lured to Israel and married 5 years ago the young talented and gorgeous Japanese dancer Mariko Kakizaki, enfanted a child and “found that there is heaven on earth.”

The evening’s menu is a selection of his works, from Max (2007), Seder (2007), Moshe (1999), Mabul (1992), and more.

Fifteen superb young dancers perform for us, and their names betray mostly sabra (Israeli born) origins.

On the stark stage of Suzanne Dellal Center, while we are looking for our seat and argue about it, a young man clad in street garb, cropped dark hair, walks nonchalantly on the stage.

Suddenly an internal fire lights. Here we see Marcel Marceau, then Michael Jackson, then a Gaga beat (a modern dance exercise sourced by Ohad Naharin proper). Slowly the whole company filters in, dressed in overall, but they are ready to perform; on your marks; this is a company enterprise where you would sweat a bit just trying to follow, understand, and then join the dancers.

“Forget, all, forget all you know, look, listen”.

The baritone voice projects from the stage. It is Ohad Naharin’s voice.

So we are back into childhood, barren of all we thought we need to know about movement.

Fifteen heads all laughing, then crying, index pointing up then down. Are these all Buddhas summing up life; good, bad, new Karma?

Follows an all-women act; vigorously declaiming, then following orders, then wrist up, clamoring for liberation. The group act in unison, and separately. Each dancer is a full master of every joint in his anatomy.

It is disconcerting and amazing to witness in how many directions, angles and extensions your wrist and hand can move without falling out of place.

Arab music fills up the stage. The serpentine rhythm and movement of oriental music entrances the youngsters and echoes a bit strangely in this veteran hall of occidental-Israeli presence.

Israel is definitely a democracy.

An interlude of courtship takes us back to dance- art as we grew up with; asking, receiving, tender love in a monogamistic frame of body and mind.

Hassidim (fanatic religious Jews) rock n' roll on the stage. Liberated, they dispense of cloths and step down to the audience, actually picking up partners for a parody of modern date; young with old, heavyset "(my back", one dancer-spectator cries out). Chinese with Israelis, black with whites, it is a world potpourri these are "dancers without borders". A new art-culture is birthing.

The final act is incantations of "Echad Mi Yodea", the first line of the Jewish Passover tradition scroll. There are 13 repeats, with one new line added each time.

A powerful p ercutting, angry, resonant , slogan recalling that the reborn, liberated Jewish people are here to stay.

The show is slated for 1 hour. Actually, it will last with you much, much longer.

Peter Hermes

Ohad Naharin

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Center for Dance, Suzanne Dellal

Tel-Aviv Yafo