

Journey into the roots of movement



HaBama, By Zvi Goren

Modern Classic

We are talking in fact about a journey – mine as a spectator – into the roots of movement as an expression of the human condition. Modern dance released the semiotic expression of classical ballet from its bonds and placed the role on an infinite treasure of movement, free choreographic ideas and the human individualistic expression of the dancers as the starting point, even when we see group dances. Modern dance evolved from ballet and contemporary dance came and seemingly broke all possible conventions.

MAX by Ohad Naharin is the classic, the modern and the contemporary all at once. The two different casts of Batsheva dancers are excellent and give the piece distinct

weight, different in the general impression of expression. Both together give to Naharin's ideas great vitality in their capabilities and in the perfection of the movement in a group which is necessary for unison or as a group of individuals, particularly in the solos, duets, trios, quartets and quintets. The clear affinity to classical ballet, which is the solid basis for the entire development of dance, reaches a climax in a solo (in wonderful and very different performances by Gilli Navot in the first cast and Yaara Moses in the second cast) and in the male trio which follows it. Not surprisingly, there was also something very swan-like in them.

A Primal expression of pain and happiness

This piece is constructed with classical meticulousness based on the affinity between the individual and the group, solo expressions or small group structures, return to the whole group and again deconstruction and construction, creation of structures in space and in time. Deliberately, throughout the piece we have a precise count via a hidden sound score which is transmitted to the ears of the dancers, in parallel to the sound score which is broadcast through the sound system to the audience.

The sense of structural precision is amplified by the spectacular lighting design of Bambi (Avi Yona Bueno), who painted the stage and the dancers with intense or soft strokes, with obscure and dark hues and with bright colors. The fascinating musical production of Ohad Fishoff and the complex sound design of Moshe Shasho have a particularly important role in the music of MAX, composed by Maxim Warrat, who is no other than Naharin himself. The music includes verbal segments (usually voiced by Naharin, or his alter-ego, Warrat), in supposedly "ethnic" languages or gibberish. One of the significant elements in the music is the repeated count from one to three or from one to ten, creating a climax of some 15 minutes towards the end of the performance. In this part the count from one to ten is performed progressively, time after time, while each count accompanies a different set of ten movements, in solos, duos, trios, quartets, quintets and of the whole group, and again in changing sets, counted in precise rhythmic unity, while the nature of movement in each set creates the sense of escalating rhythm.

And after all this, the question is what this piece is all about. The answer is as complex as the complexity of each spectator. Not as commentators of a story but as the ones who create it together with the choreography. For Naharin this is a journey into human essence and he does it through his journey into the roots of movement - movement which is a primal expression of pain and happiness, of the solitude of the individual, the essence of the couple, the essence of a team and the essence of society as a whole.

And this is the purpose of this art – on stage and in the audience together.