

Aviv. These were also attended by international presenters whose way and hotel expenses were also paid for by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Finance (like presenters attending Exposure in Tel Aviv). Out of curiosity, I decided to travel to Jerusalem on a courtesy bus to see Ruttenberg's work. Along with Jerusalem International Dance Week, the combined platform followed International Exposure in Tel Aviv. Ofra Idel, artistic director at *Machol Shalem* explained that MASH does have more experimental works perhaps on a smaller scale than Exposure. One can't say though that only small-scale works are seen in Jerusalem as there were solos and duets and trios seen during Exposure.

A convention has developed that if one festival presents a choreographer, then the other won't. Maybe there is simply too much happening in Israel for all to be included in one festival, belying Exposure's status as The Place to see Israeli contemporary dance? Perhaps there could be coordinated planning to distinguish between works befitting a big opera house and others for more intimate settings?

Like many of the works seen in both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Ruttenberg's *Everything Must Go* was a theatre dance piece, featuring speaking performers. Their patter was sometimes entertaining, and sometimes serious, especially about coping with excess. As the audience filed in, we watched the trio of exceptional dancers—Hillel Kogan, Dana Ruttenberg and Andrea Costanzo Martini—giving away enormous stacks of CDs handing them out one by one as gifts, explaining why each in the CD collection had been important in casual conversation as if we all knew each other. It was relaxed and intimate and successful beginning. As more and more possessions were revealed, in cartons, or carried on stage or dumped on the floor we tried to grasp if someone were moving houses? Or had there been a death in the family and possessions were being re-distributed or was it just fatigue at dealing with cartons of vintage clothing like a blouse in familiar geometric patterns from long-ago-styles. Death was the unspoken presence, Kogan valiantly exercised on an exercise bike and Ruttenberg endlessly cleaned and moved objects piling up or Martini spoke while executing his flawless ballet technique; non sequiturs both spoken and danced added up to a delightful work, penetrating our need to amass things over time.

Regretfully I can't make a connection between Suzanne Dellal and choreographers Yossi Berg and Oded Graf or their work *When Love Walked In* for I don't believe they were part of the residency

program. It was also seen in MASH. Suffice it to say, I found it captivating, including their use of the popular feature of speaking while dancing. In this case, they said they were oscillating between dancing and talking, "between...nostalgia, short stories connected by a body in search of intimacy".

Another new aspect in Exposure was *A Program for Emerging Choreographs 1-2-3, or Solo Duet Trio*. An elaborate fold out brochure with titles printed in Hebrew, Arabic and English with over 8 choreographers coached by several including Naomi Perlov and guest of honor Daphnis Kokkios, former assistant to Pina Bausch. Judges were named in the program brochure, so we learned the emerging choreographers were vetted to get into the program, and vetted whether to advance from learning about solos to duets to trios.

Overall, there was still a chance to see marvelous, original works though more limited in what has been presented at Exposure in the past. Those attending this year did experience a new more leisurely feel to the four days, with more time between performances to consider what had been seen, to allow for interaction presumably between choreographers and presenters, with more social hours and a rousing concluding party that all promoted camaraderie between the invited guests; one would have hoped for that between the choreographers, too.

The evanescence of the dances is hard to grasp, like trailing on the Mediterranean beach so nearby. One hopes the artistic insights, earnestness, fervor, originality, and the ingenuity of Israeli dance carries on and continues to be seen world-wide through the aid of International Exposure despite the newly injected competition.

Judith Brin Ingber, dancer and independent scholar, was a dance composition student of Bessie Schoenberg's at Sarah Lawrence College. In the 1970s she lived in Israel teaching for Batsheva and Bat Dor and assisting Sara Levi-Tanai at Inbal Dance Theatre. In the bio-pic *Mr. Gaga*, she speaks about Ohad Naharin's student days. She also co-founded the *Israeli Dance Annual* with Giora Manor, precursor to *Dance Today*. In the US she taught in the Dept. of Theatre Arts and Dance, University of Minnesota; co-founded the chamber performing group Voices of Sepharad; continues writing and lecturing (especially at the Connery Conference for Jewish Arts). See <http://www.jbrinningber.com>.

a burden on the audience. Still as the dancers freed themselves, eventually stripping down to gold bathing suits, their high heels were sometimes kicked off and other times frantically desired as if security blankets that couldn't be dispensed with. There was ingenuity in their variations of using their props of chairs, shoes and veils. They flipped between anger, mocking the flirtations expected of attractive women pondering the serious inhibitions due to expected and damaging behaviors.

Something happened to interviewing choreographers and seeing works deemed special by the Suzanne Dellal administration. When the International Exposure was on-line, it was quite marvelous to tune into interviews with the choreographers which enhanced our understanding of the shown works. During Corona (or Covid as Americans refer to it), Suzanne Dellal helped choreographers develop works by giving them rehearsal space. Previously those choreographers helped and deemed "in residence" had their works shown during Exposure.

Now that we were all together again, the interviewing was dropped. Instead, there was a new feature of Exposure called "Pitching". Perhaps it was the fever of the world soccer cup tournament in Qatar, infecting all aspects of the day and night—not just on TV and in the press but taking up time and attention. Competition seemed everywhere. I had understood that the arts were separate from sports. That was because the main point of sports was winning while the energy in the arts was meant for something else, including expressing experience and response to events whether inspired by history or reality or feelings, to create a unique art work whether with collaborators or solo. During International Dance Exposure, the line between concert dance and competition was suddenly blurred.

"Pitching" (selling) was allocated almost five hours in the Exposure schedule. Though the aim of Exposure always has been to bring international presenters to Israel to watch Israeli choreography in turn to garner work abroad for the Israelis this new feature announced something special: "concrete opportunities" for the chosen winner. A panel of presenters would consider the work of thirteen choreographers who would speak and show videos in a highly timed delivery. A winner would be announced, and that choreographer was promised by the panel real contractual work—a residency or a commission or a teaching opportunity abroad. Strangely, of those vetted to pitch their work, only Roni Chadash was included in the Exposure schedule. At the end of all the competitors' presentations, the panel voted and Chadash was announced the winner.

Noted was that the panelists themselves didn't say why they voted for her; they did not represent much diversity, mainly coming from Europe, unlike representatives seen during Exposure who came from other world cultures including the Far East or the newest representatives of presenters, from Morocco and Kosovo. Rather than comity, this new feature of Exposure, which would assure one Israeli choreographer plumb work abroad, created divisiveness and competition.

How enriching it would have been on the schedule rather than those "chosen" to "Pitch" their works to have seen the result of choreographers chosen by Suzanne Dellal's staff and panels to work during Corona. In previous Exposures, choreographers in residence were given slots in the schedule. We learned in the past two years there were choreographers who received rehearsal space to work during Corona including choreographers Oren Laor and Niv Shenfield as well Dana Ruttenberg, Ella Rothschild and Orly Portal. Perhaps there were others. Money for producing a full production was awarded to the incomparable Inbal Pinto to develop her new work *Livingroom*. Need we say that there was no acknowledgement that such works had been sponsored by the Centre during the down time we couldn't gather in Tel Aviv. and others received funds for creating a full production. The "winner" for that, in the new Exposure parlance, was the incomparable Inbal Pinto; in the work she developed, *Livingroom* she was credited as choreographer and set designer, costumer plus the creator of wall drawing for this remarkable work. The star dancer in Pinto's work, was the flexible and contortionist beyond imagination, Moran Muller with Itamar Serussi, the latter entering the set through an armoire later in the piece. Unfortunately, no one attending Exposure could see *Livingroom* because, for whatever reason, it wasn't an offering despite its unique Dellal status "awarded" during Covid.

I saw Pinto's brilliant work after Exposure had concluded and all the presenters had presumably returned to their homes abroad; it was also been offered before, simply an offering as an independent evening program in Suzanne Dellal's proscenium theater. Like any other dance audience member and fan of Pinto's, I eagerly watched her work with its magical set of a living room that kept morphing into amusing and unexpected sights: lights that turned into side-ways dreidels spinning on the wall, or chairs or a table that moved seemingly of their own volition. We watch a woman in her dress measure off her living room foot by foot with her in her stocking feet, parsing all sides of the room, down the wall, in improbable positions somewhat like an inchworm. Each of her following moves, shapes and expressions were entirely fantastical, from the way she tied the tie on her shoe (shoes often a prop in Pinto's works) reaching her foot from an improbably unnatural and wide-spread of her legs, to her later off-hand interactions with the man in her room. Wouldn't it have been logical to have presented one of the masters of Israeli choreography, Pinto, in her newest work to presenters hungry to know who and what to bring to their theatres world-wide?

Couldn't we also have seen Oren Laor and Niv Sheinfeld's new work, since they've been stand-buys in previous Exposures, or Ruttenberg's new work? Others granted time to work during Corona in the Dellal residency program whose works we also didn't see were Orly Portal and Ella Rothschild. It only whets the appetite to wonder why these sponsored works, paid for in part by public funds, were never seen but snippets of 13 trying out for an award of work offered by panels in a marathon of 5 hours were presented instead.

I discovered that Ruttenberg's premier would be part of Jerusalem's MASH or *Mahol Shalem* festival, coinciding with the 10th Jerusalem International Dance Week, immediately following Exposure in Tel



Vertigo Dance Company, *Makom* by Noa Wertheim, dancers: Mica Aimos, Sion Olles (centre), Ilan Golubovich, photo: Elad Debi

the audience became a community, saved by being brought to a different place and then guided to be in a circle, holding hands. The community feeling was enhanced beyond measure when music of beloved Israeli folk dances of long ago suddenly flooded the plaza and those standing were guided into *Zemer Atik* or *Hora Mamtera* and dances of Israel of long ago. An unexpected fervor and enthusiasm were injected from the energy of the well-known dances with more and more people joining up until the plaza was spontaneously filled with many who had been in the audience. Then once again, the entire community was guided to watch at the back of the plaza where enormous words appeared on a frame, each letter outlined in combustible material. Indeed, it was all set afire and we watched entranced as fire can hold sway. Was one of the words VICTORY? Yerushalmi's phalanx had succeeded in seemingly saving the public and reinvesting them with joy and life.

Hands Up by Ofir Yudilevitch with Imogene Huzel—like a modern day couple, they had met on the internet and decided to be together, in this case, to make us a dance. It was so refreshingly different, light hearted, and a celebration of the unusual. Huzel executed the most extraordinary walking and balancing, lowering and rising, all upside down on her hands. There's a patter that goes along with Huzel adjusting and maneuvering two strange cane like props enabling her to stand on her hands, adroitly and unexpectedly taking shapes sometimes on uneven these struts. "I'm Imogene...I'm a dancer in a circus, I even have a BA degree in circus" she tells us; the choreographer and the circus dancer are getting together and she says she'll be in Berlin and he says he's in a festival in Tel Aviv. "Does it pay well?" she asks.

"No!"

The audience laughs,
"And then we got together".

In addition to the tricks and the surprises, there's a lot of technical aspects with video projections of what she's doing, more gravity-defying tricks, and the thought she might get really injured or even die falling occurs to us. She's doing back flips and yoga like movements. And then a strange set of objects is wheeled in, wired together and gets positioned in the center. The parts are constructed into a robot and it becomes clear it's a contest. Will the robot succeed in standing on one of its arm-like appendage, like Huzel? Can a machine do what a circus dancer can? It talks, too, "I can take over for you if you're tired... I can do the splits...I hope I won't crash" voicing the fears of the audience for the dancer...Everything is almost awry and there's nothing elegant about the robot. But in the end, the robot succeeds, moving onto one metallic arm, without crashing. The whole work was so original and unexpectedly joyful, that it was utterly refreshing.

Choreographers work hard to show their work at Exposure and to reach out to all the presenters with their publicity packets, DVDs of their work, and all kinds of inventive PR including flash drives in unique shapes, (such as a key-chain flash drive in the shape of high heels to promote Oryan Yohanan and Ilana Sarah Claire Bellahsen's *These 2 Shall Pass* duet). Their piece began with the two in ingenious costumes of soft veil perched somehow high up taller beyond their heads. They faced each other on chairs, their feet clad in extremely high heels. Even under their long veils their alluring legs protruded. It took too long and the given hour that so many seem to feel they're obligated to fill was at times

edge of the stage or leaning against the two walls of the house. Few thought to take a seat as Tashach had just started speaking. He never stopped for the entire hour of his solo, his command of spoken English remarkable. At first it seemed to be a scientific lecture about the effect of trauma on the body, and maladies of walking after stroke and parkinsons. disorders of movement, and the effect of tension on a specific minute bone in the neck called the hyroid bone; we learned through projected anatomical drawings and examples of posture how distorted the body can become. His own tension, he reveals, was caused by bullies mocking him as a gay youth, affecting not only a frozen jaw but down to his gait. Dancing in broad, bold, sweeping movements by then on stage accompanied by his voice should have freed him, but we learn anatomically why that's not possible or why a beleaguered gay man even as an adult in a supposedly open era cannot just slough off old fears or find an internal cure to internalized hurts. It was revelatory after hearing and watching Tashach that it's not a matter of deciding on a new posture as a dancer would be able to simply show what a choreographer asks. It's not a simple matter to change one's persona as reflected physically through and through, like changing into a new costume.

It turns out Tashach was an articulate advocate for the positive connections made between foreign presenters and Israeli choreographers, anti-Israel BDS and protests aside. He advocated for the Exposure program allowing him work abroad more than once over the years. He was part of a panel of dancers and the experienced diplomat Anat Gilad of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs interviewed by Iris Lana and Yali Nativ in three Exposure Live talks tucked into the schedule on the three different days. Over the years Gilad has developed a sympathetic, informed and well-spoken outlook explaining how the Ministry works hand in hand with the Israeli cultural attaches of different countries, dance leaders and directors of festivals in the different countries to pave the way for Israeli dancers. One goal she mentioned was to expand the possibilities of foreign opportunities with new presenters -- this year that included Kosovo and Morocco who sent representatives to Exposure.

Tashach endorsed Exposure saying that there's such an array of possibilities for work, that when he has been presented abroad, he's had such a variety of responses that he has felt validated and grateful, too, to the State of Israel (through the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) for backing him and Exposure. "It's a great opportunity to think bigger and to be involved in cultural dialogue allowing for inspiring encounters and conversations." One hopes with the new government coalition under Netanyahu that support for the arts under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue with this same annual support.

Vertigo's new company work *Makom* (place) by director Noa Wertheim and co-choreographed by Rina Wertheim-Koren featured 9 dancers and a set of wooden sticks and logs ingeniously manipulated by them. Sometimes the performers created a sacrificial alter or a dwelling or shelter as the time together progressed (the set was designed by Zohar Shoeff). *Makom* has also connotations as another word for God, and as in godly power,



Hands Up, created and performed by Ofir Yudilevich and Imogene Huzelm, photo: Yair Meyuhas

the dancers too seem able to do that human thing of both building and destroying their ingenious creations. All the while there is powerful, mesmerizing magic of sound and rhythmic movement, ever drawing our attention as we watch the dancers set about their tasks. Despite their almost sack-like non-descript garb in earth colors, they move beautifully even in contrasts of harmony and abruptness, or anger and love, building a community that we come to hope will triumph.

Public Movement, Emergency Routine, Yerushalmi's work, had a much rawer feel—the dancers in everyday dress looking just like anyone else in the audience but they turned out to be highly disciplined, moving together without speaking, on a mission to take everyone to safety should an emergency occur. At first the audience was seated all around the stone plaza on low benches. As if a special force, the dancers arrived, shifting where everyone sat, by appearing before someone, then gently, in tandem, that person would be raised from their seat, lifted very deliberately and passed over head, carried over the space and gently seated across from where they'd been. This was repeated over and over, but it was fascinating to watch, and then the psychological wondering who would be next, might it be yourself, how would one react as

Competition Unmasked

Suzanne Dellal Centre International Exposure for Dance 2022

Judith Brin Ingber

Expectations from the Annual Platform for Contemporary Dance in Israel; known simply as International Exposure, was what the wonderful annual event has offered before: a fair look at the dance landscape of Israel for some 150 international presenters, guests of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Suzanne Dellal Centre for Dance and Theatre. This year it was held Nov. 30-Dec. 4, 2022 after a hiatus of two years due to Corona. The past two years this annual Exposure was confined to zoom but did continue nonetheless. There was jubilation when it was available once again in person with the chance to see new works by companies and groups of differing sizes down to solos.

Just before Corona, there had been a change in administration at the Suzanne Dellal Centre. The literature in the Exposure packet, explained that Suzanne Dellal, established in 1989, is still considered Israel's premier presenter of Israeli and international dance. Established 34 years ago it still intends to "cultivate, support and promote the art of contemporary dance in Israel". When the founding director Yair Vardi retired (he also had created International Exposure), two have replaced him: Naomi Perlov as artistic director and Anat Fischer-Leventon, as CEO. With new directors, as one would expect, the International Exposure took some new turns. There were less established companies shown such as the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Co.; nothing of Yasmeen Godder or Inbal Pinto's troupe though we did see Vertigo's newest

Makom by director Noa Wertheim and as usual, Exposure guests could see a rehearsal of Ohad Naharin's newest premiere, *Momo* for the Batsheva Dance Company.

The set included a climbing wall at the back, occasionally inhabited by four men who were a kind of team or platoon, versus 7 others who were more grounded. Unique too was a section with a dramatic use of the ballet barre when the dancers hung from it too or went through some what could have been called conventional ballet exercises but at breakneck speed with the usual perspective inverted and circular instead of working first on the right side of the body and then turning at the barre to work on the left. It was a *tour de force* of extreme extensions of the legs.

What follows are comments on some of what I did see, especially the extraordinary *Public Movement, Emergency Routine* by Dana Yerushalmi and her company (seen in the inner plaza between the buildings of Suzanne Dellal Centre); Noa Wertheim's *Makom* for her company Vertigo played in Suzanne Dellal's proscenium theater. Also, I was introduced for the first time to Rotem Tashach in his new solo called *Throat Command* in one of Suzanne Dellal's small theaters; the duet by Oryan Yohanan and Ilana Sarah Claire Bellahsen's *These 2 Shall Pass* was a studio showing as was Ofir Yudilevitch's *Hands Up* danced by acrobat Imogene Hozell.

Tashach's *Throat Command* started out as a monologue, though it was sprung on the audience members who wandered in with no presumptions, staggered around the stage, some sitting on the