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**Dance**

## Grace and speed from Vertigo Dance Company at the Baryshnikov Arts Center, New York

The Israeli troupe performed an entrancing piece about isolation and togetherness



The Vertigo Dance Company performing 'One. One & One' at the Baryshnikov Arts Center © Stephanie Berger

Apollinaire Scherr 2 HOURS AGO

One is a lonely number but also a sign of unity, Noa Wertheim, co-founder of the 25-year-old Jerusalem modern dance troupe Vertigo, has pointed out. The example with which the Israeli native grew up was Yahweh, the only God (as He constantly reminds his unreliable flock) because He is enough, containing multitudes. One. One & One mines this paradox of isolation and togetherness for humans — the individual and his or her tribe.

The entrancing hour-long dance for nine, co-created with Wertheim's sister Rina Wertheim-Koren, begins with the heavy-lidded beauty Shani Licht bending to the side like a bow, then arching back, her belly as her fulcrum, so her loose black locks stream to the floor. When a quartet of men — dressed as modestly as she, in long-sleeved, earth-toned shirts tucked into their high-waisted trousers and buttoned to the neck — gather around her, she begins to fall like a tree. They keep righting her but end up restraining her too, braiding her hair to better rein her in.

Scene after scene, demarcated by Avi Belleli's rather too rangy musical mash-up, offers variations on bonding: sensual mirroring duets; one person curled up in another's arms like a breaching baby; a column of dancers catapulting themselves into waiting embraces; unison dancing, which Wertheim deploys only partially (someone is always wandering off on their own).

Vertigo's style is recognisably Israeli. As with Batsheva or émigré Hofesh Shechter, it owes less to ballet than to compulsory military training: the dancers are always diving to the floor where they scramble forward and back. With their grace and speed, though, they seem less like soldiers than like lithe animals.

Vertigo's use of arms and hands, however, is thoroughly human and all its own. The dancers hold their hands close to their skin, protectively. With their fingers, they trace the outline of their own face, the circumference of their skull, the breadth of an arm or the softness of a hip. The grazing

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seems innocent — a reassurance to self that you exist, possess substance — until Hagar Shachal calls attention to her enticing curves. She does so matter-of-factly but the va-va-voom associations are impossible to ignore. Is this our problem or hers? Is she objectifying herself or are we? The dance doesn't say but the tribe does, encircling Shachal and pressing her to the ground when she tries to flee.

One. One & One ends soon afterwards, in a muscular-mystical key that doesn't quite dispel the note of menace. The dancers lower and raise their arms like steady wings. They are the angels of our nature, better and worse.

★★★★☆

Touring to Cleveland and Baltimore, [vertigo.org.il](http://vertigo.org.il)

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