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## Vertigo Dance Company takes New York City

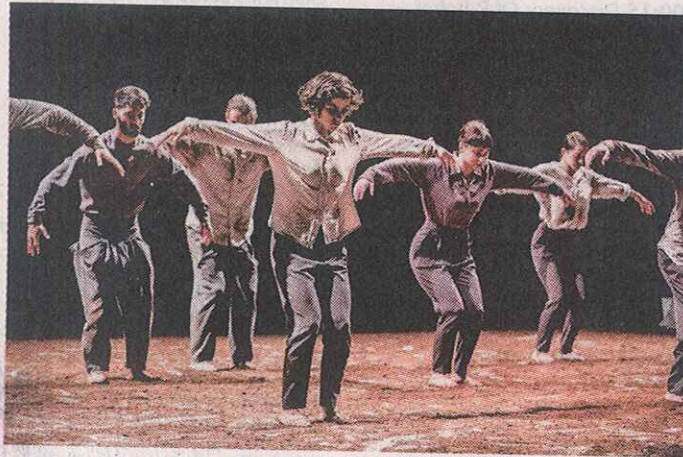
• By HALEY COHEN

Jerusalem Post Correspondent

NEW YORK – Back on their biennial United States tour, the Israeli contemporary dance company Vertigo is performing for two sold-out audiences in New York City.

Shows on Tuesday and Wednesday are at the Baryshnikov Arts Center in Manhattan, a venue that seats 250. Although the company is accustomed to a larger audience, according to cofounder and director Adi Sha'al, this show was one of the most exciting yet because the performers received a personal invitation from Russian dancer and actor Mikhail Baryshnikov after he saw the group in two performances staged at the Sibiu festival in Romania and was captivated.

"In the last few decades, some wonderful dance artists have established an important place in Israel's cultural landscape, and Vertigo Dance Company is among them. We will present a powerful work performed by this excellent ensemble whose movement quality is visceral and raw, but with a surprising, acute sensitivity," said Barysh-



THE VERTIGO dance troupe in action. (Rune Abrou)

nikov, who founded the namesake arts center.

"Baryshnikov's venue is very prestigious. Professionally, it's huge for us to be performing here," Sha'al told *The Jerusalem Post* just hours before the 2019 US premiere on Tuesday.

Sha'al founded the Vertigo Dance Company in 1992 together with his wife Noa Wertheim. The couple met while performing in the Jerusalem Tamar Dance Company. Partners in dance and life, Sha'al and Wertheim's first professional collaboration, a

duet called *Vertigo*, led to the establishment of their troupe of the same name. The inspiration came from Sha'al's first-hand experience with the feeling of vertigo during his years of training with the air force. Retired from dancing, Sha'al and Wertheim now choreograph routines; a blend of modern dance and classical ballet, for their 10 dancers who perform up to 100 shows annually in Israel and worldwide. "It's grown bigger than we ever could have dreamed," Sha'al said. The company's studios are located

at the Gerard Behar Center in Jerusalem and at Kibbutz Netiv Halamed-Heh where it established an ecological arts village in 2007.

Coming to the US from Jerusalem naturally means representing Israel, Sha'al told the *Post*. But he added that his mission is to provide viewers with a taste of international contemporary dance – not something uniquely Israeli or carrying a political message.

"We hope everyone interprets the shows in their own ways. We really leave interpretation up to the audience. We just bring the message of art," Sha'al said.

Following the Big Apple productions, Vertigo will continue their tour in Ohio and Maryland before returning to Israel.

At a time when it is no longer debatable that the rate of antisemitism is continuing to rise across the US and around the globe, Sha'al said it is refreshing how welcoming New Yorkers have been to him and his performers. "I know that we are not welcome everywhere in the world," he said. "But here in New York, everyone is so friendly to us."