

(Yoel Levy)



Moving shapes

By ORI J. LENKINSKI

Next month, as part of the annual Israel Festival, the Vertigo Dance Company will present a new work by Sharon Fridman entitled “Shape on Us.” The work is not just a choreography, but the product of an ongoing engagement of Vertigo Dance Company with the disability community.

In 2000, Adam Benjamin led a series of contact improvisation workshops in which classes were integrated with able- and disabled-bodied dancers. It was in these workshops that Tali Wertheim, sister of Vertigo’s artistic director Noa Wertheim, and Hai Cohen met. They began to explore the potential of the practice Benjamin had proposed further, traveling to other countries and holding their own workshops. Occasionally, these meetings led to performances, however the practice continued to develop in the studio.

The first production, Power of Balance, became its own branch of the company. Housed in the ecological village in Netiv Halamed Hey, Power of Balance continues to engage with communities throughout Israel and further afield. For many years, Power of Balance and Vertigo Dance

Company worked in parallel. The main troupe of Vertigo’s, whose cast is comprised of able-bodied dancers, created new works and performed them. Now, the company is placing Power of Balance in the forefront.

They called upon Fridman, former company member and renowned choreographer, to create a new work for Power of Balance. Having grown up with a disabled mother, Fridman is acutely aware of the importance of balance. In his childhood home,

movement was used as a means to tackle daily physical challenges; moving from chair to chair, rising from the floor and completing simple household tasks.

Perhaps it was due to his respect for movement that Fridman found himself dancing. In his choreographies, the dancers appear to fly. Fridman’s expertise in contact and partnering elevate his works to almost superhuman levels. He employs great speed, striking softness and force to weld together his dances.

From Israel, where we also worked with Ido Tadmor and the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company, Fridman relocated to Spain. His works have been seen extensively abroad and he has been commissioned to create choreographies for a long list of companies. Last year, he presented work as part of the Tel Aviv Dance Festival at the Suzanne Dellal Center.

In the creative process that led up to “Shape on Us,” Fridman spent a great deal of time learning his cast members, studying their movement and allowing for them to connect with one another. There was no divide between able and disabled-bodied participants. Everyone worked together to define a new movement language, shared by all. The result is not just a dance piece, it is a breathtaking lesson in listening, sharing and connection.

Shape on Us will be performed at the Israel Festival on September 8 and 9 and at the Suzanne Dellal Center on September 16 and 17. For more information, visit www.vertigo.org.il.



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