



March 22, 2008

## **Kaleidoscope on New York Stage: The JCC in Manhattan and Consulate General of Israel kick off Israel's 60th birthday with the Israel non-stop arts festival**

By Miri Ben-Shalom

Since the opening of its new home on Amsterdam Avenue and 76th Street in 2002, the **Jewish Community Center (JCC) in Manhattan** brings high quality and diverse programs that are rooted in Jewish values to New York residents. As part of its mission, the JCC in Manhattan seeks to fulfill its responsibility to the people of Israel by embracing a strong connection with the Israeli arts community. For the past 6 years, The JCC has held the **ISRAEL NON-STOP annual arts festival**, which presents seven days of Israeli film, music, theater, dance, food, photographs and literature. Over the years some of the most prominent and promising Israeli artists were invited to participate in this salute to Israel: writers such as Etgar Keret (2003), choreographers like Emanuel Gat (2004), musicians such as Idan Raichl (2004) or film makers like Shemi Zarchin (2008), to name a few.

Israeli artists are making their mark in the states. This year, from February 28th through March 6th, Israel Non-Stop kicked off Israel's 60th birthday by presenting back-to-back performances and events that exemplify the exciting, moving and fearless artistic efforts that continue to come out of Israel. Dance, theater, music, art, film, food and wine; a week long stream of interesting, thought-provoking and moving events and programs that signify the individuality of Israel's artistic expression. Among the 2008 participants was Shalom Hanoach, one of the most significant artists in Israeli rock, and one of the most fascinating and prolific forces in all of Israeli music, as well as the dynamic Hip Hop-Funk fusion of Coolooloosh. The popular author Galila Ron-Feder shared her stories from Israel with an enthusiastic audience of children and their parents. Also featured were the renowned actor Moti Katz with his one-man show Actor's Kitchen, the play *Black Rain*, the films *Aviva My Love* and *Dear Mr. Waldman*, **Ohad Naharin's dance *Kamuyot***, and the list goes on. The JCC opened the festival with *Black Rain*, directed by Ofira Henig and presented by the Herzliya Theater Ensemble and Haifa Theater. The play, which premiered at the Israel Festival in 2007, explores the issues of dropping the atomic bomb upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and, indirectly, the implications for modern day Israel and the rest of the world.

No doubt, the "star" of the festival and the audience draw was **Ohad Naharin and his Batsheva Ensemble**, the company's junior troupe, performing *Kamuyot*. Based on two of his other works, *Mamootot* and *Moshe*, this piece was created for young audiences. Since it is often performed in schools, it is staged in the square, with no particular lighting design. But make no mistake, this fact in no way means that Naharin's composition is any less complex, less demanding, or his vision diluted. The imagery, the intensity, the humor, the music, the audience inclusion in the piece, all make it appealing to adults as much as to kids. No less powerful and remarkable are the young dancers themselves. Their execution of the complexity of the movements, the contortions, the liquidity, the gestures and expressions, all contributed to a thrilling performance. Regretful that the piece "slipped quietly into the city as part as the Israel Non-Stop Arts Festival," **The New York Times**, calling Ohad Naharin "one of the most fascinating dancemakers on the planet" writes: "Although *kamuyot* was apparently created with children and adolescents in mind, it is as inventive and complex as anything Mr. Naharin has ever conceived."