

Rural Intelligence



Vertigo Dance Company and LeeSaar The Company: Two Israeli Troupes at the Pillow

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July 6, 2012



Photo: Christopher Duggan

NYC-based **LeeSaar The Company**, led by Israelis Lee Sher and Saar Harari, brings a different type of gravity to the Doris Duke Theater with *FAME*. Again, the stage is white, but so is the lighting throughout most of the evening-length piece. The female dancers emerge in street tops and flesh-toned underpants, which gives them a certain look of vulnerability. Oh, and there's one male dancer, co-choreographer Harari, who wears a cowboy hat in most of what little time he spends on stage, where he variously strikes studly poses and casts pseudo-seductive glances at the audience, dances with heightened

self-consciousness, or mimes riding a horse through repetitive pelvic-thrusting movements.



The piece consists of a series of vignettes, solos or group segments in which dancers interact but never make contact. Among the standouts: dancer Candice Schnurr, center stage (in photo, left, by Taylor Crichton), strips down to black lace panties and bra, and seems to be critically examining her thoroughly lean body in a mirror, looking for a trace of body fat that is just not there on her 12-pack stomach, then slipping into sexy dance moves and poses, interspersed with fast jerky movements. Another dancer subtly slips on stage, lying on the floor and saying in Hebrew something like “I must work out more.” In another scene, a dancer emerges upstage with a microphone into a spotlight and acts out the false humility of a pop star, mouthing the words and going through the motions of a celebrity performing a sappy song. She walks into the audience, interacting with her adoring fans, but when the song ends and the applause wells, she has been, literally, upstaged; another “star” is there in the spotlight, receiving the adulation. Such is the fleeting nature of fame; one moment you’re hot, the next you’re not.

The piece addresses the price of fame in many ways. In one segment, the cowboy rides along the periphery of the stage, plucks tiny Hsin-Yi Hsing out from the group, plopping her behind him on his invisible horse. They “ride” in place faster and more jerkily and when the movement reaches a climax he suddenly tosses her off and rides away, and it becomes clear that he has taken her for a ride in more ways than one. In another, a woman on the floor, legs spread wide, knees bent, feet on the ground (as if in a gynecologist’s apparatus) rocks her pelvis nonstop, while reciting both parts of a dialog that make it clear she is on the casting couch.

FAME is full of voguing that transitions into fast, disjointed movements and back again. The dancers’ legs swing up in awkward off-kilter angles, as if they are not part of their bodies; their hips are loose, opening and closing in a snap. The choreography includes many confrontational conceits; dancers pose seated on the ground, legs spread wide open while they stare fiercely into the audience, or take a stance on all fours, butts proffered to the viewers. They lie on their sides and smily slyly out into the stands. Repeatedly the

dancers snap in and out of very low, very wide squats so quickly one wonders how they manage not to pull their groin muscles. There's a lot of frantic big movement interspersed with those pseudo-raunchy poses and small dance club steps, and yet one of the most arresting moments is when Jye-Hwei Lin holds her squat and moves only her eyes, side to side, for an extended period of time, as if she's looking around to see who's looking at her. It's us, of course, as all consumers of culture are complicit in creating fame.

(Note: the Vertigo feature has been removed from this posting. Full article can be found at: http://www.ruralintelligence.com/index.php/arts_section/arts_articles_music/vertigo_dance_company_and_leesaar_the_company_two_israeli_troupes_at_jacobs/)