



Batsheva Dance Company 2011-2012: The Year Ahead

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Batsheva Dance Company in Ohad Naharin's *Sadeh21*. Photo by Gadi Dagon.

Last week, Batsheva Dance Company unveiled its 2011-2012 season at a press conference in Studio Varda. And what a season it will be!

On December 30, the troupe will premiere two new works, one by Sharon Eyal and Gai Bachar and the other by Yasmeen Godder. At the end of March, the junior Batsheva Ensemble will debut another new work by Sharon Eyal and Gai Bachar along with a restaging of Ohad Naharin's classic *Tabula Rasa* (1986), which has not been shown in Israel since 2004. Tel Aviv audiences will also be treated to performances of Eyal's *Bill* and Naharin's *Sadeh21*, *Hora*, *MAX*, *Shalosh*, *Kamuyot*, *Deca Dance*, and *Furo*, created in collaboration with the Japanese video artist Tabaimo and last staged in Israel in 2008. Both the main company and the ensemble will travel around Israel, appearing in other cities and throughout the periphery; the troupes will

also journey abroad, with several performances in Europe in November and December and a North American tour in February and March. By the time the season ends, the two companies will have given a combined total of well over two hundred performances.

The press conference kicked off with a peek at an installation that the main company will perform at the Fondation Beyeler, a museum in Basel, on November 23 and 24. In the museum, the audience will sit around the space and can come and go as they please; in the press conference, we too sat around the perimeter of the space and remained riveted during the brief showing. As company member Guy Shomroni DJ'ed, the rest of the dancers filtered in and out of the center, quoting snippets from across Naharin's repertory. Here and there duets formed spontaneously and unison took shape organically. Phrases from different works created unusual juxtapositions, while occasionally more and more dancers gathered to build a section from a single work.

Although I was invited to this press conference as a dance writer, I attended it along with the other 29 dancers who are studying Ohad Naharin's movement language in the inaugural year of the Gaga Teacher Training Program – and in the midst of my total immersion in Gaga, my viewing was undoubtedly colored by my recent experiences in the studio. I couldn't help but notice the Batsheva dancers slip in and out of phrases we have been learning in our repertory classes, like the quiet unison from *Kamuyot* (based on *Mamootot*) and a short, speedy solo from *Sadeh21*.

While a thrill surged through my body as I recognized these movements, I was even more fascinated by the dancers' mastery of Naharin's movement language. Trained for years in Gaga, these dancers move fluently in Naharin's idiom, and their knowledge of his recent repertory is encyclopedic. Like writers cleverly engaging in wordplay, these dancers rummaged freely through Naharin's vocabulary and deployed witty plays on movement.

I continued to mull over the Batsheva dancers' relationship to Gaga as the press conference continued on to previews of the new work by Sharon Eyal and Gai Bachar as well as that of Yasmeen Godder. Sharon Eyal, herself steeped in Gaga as a former member of Batsheva and as the company's current house choreographer, has developed a unique voice that nevertheless is a cousin to Naharin's language. Having worked with Eyal on previous productions, the dancers moved in her creation as if speaking one of their native tongues. And even though Yasmeen Godder's language is further removed on the family tree of contemporary dance, the five Batsheva dancers in her new work adapted admirably to her vocabulary. This mixed bill is one to look forward to, for it showcases the range of this company's extraordinary dancers in works by some of this country's most exciting choreographers.