

## The Reviews Archive

[Return](#) to previous page.

### Emmanuel Gat Dance

2009-06-23

Embracing the tension of the middle ground: Emmanuel Gat opens the ADF Israeli Festival

"Artmaking is about contrast," choreographer Emanuel Gat offered at the post-performance discussion following the world premiere performance of *Winter Variations* at the Reynolds Industries Theater (June 22-24, 2009). From the first image, Gat revealed the contrasts at the heart of the work, balancing the tension between darkness and light, sound and silence, movement and stillness. The duet, created and performed by Gat and Roy Assaf, opened with an electronic hum, growing gradually louder. The lights blinked on, revealing large squares of faint light on the stage, separated by margins of shadow. Gat and Assaf, sometimes alone, sometimes weaving in and out of unison, moved with precision into and between the lighted areas, freezing for long, measured pauses before continuing. Filled with specific but baffling gestures - an arm outstretched like an elephant's trunk, a hand cupped under the chin - the full-body movement skimmed the surface of the stage with a smooth, unhurried lightness. Arms and elbows fanned and pierced the air, framing and passing over the face and around the head. The idiosyncratic movement remained compelling throughout the work, as it grew in intensity or pulled back, connected the two men or propelled them apart.

According to the program notes, space emerged as a primary element in the creation of the duet, so that the stage itself became almost a "third actor." Both the lighting design and the use of the vast stage by the dancers - in their proximity to or distance from each other or in their exploration of the farthest corners - brought the space alive. Negative space was made clearly visible and significant as the dancers played in the spaces between elbow and ribs, between the knees, within the shadowy margins of the light.

Set to an eclectic score including works by The Beatles (*A Day in the Life*), Richard Strauss (*Four Last Songs*), and Egyptian composer Riad Al Sunbati (*Awedt eyni*), *Winter Variations* came together out of solo work by the two dancers as well as scraps of ideas and movement developed in Gat's recent group choreography. The work, according to Gat, follows a strict formalistic logic, negotiating elements such as time, space, line, lighting, rhythm, and music. Gat has balanced these components masterfully, particularly the sense of timing - between the dancers, or with the musical phrasing - and the pacing of the dance as a whole. He seems to know just how long to stretch each moment, and when to jump quickly ahead. Beyond these formal elements, Gat claims not to know what the dance is about; if he has done his choreographic job right, he seems to be saying, then the work itself will suggest images, emotional content, and particular metaphoric significance to viewers, in a multitude of interpretations.

Certainly one of the most potent aspects of *Winter Variations*, as in the dancers' previous duet, *Winter Voyage*, is the relationship between the two men. Throughout the hour-long work, this relationship took on layers and permutations of significance. Power, intimacy, vulnerability, indifference, synchronicity, individuality - all were present. Performing in diverging and converging streams of movement or perfect unison, the two men passed long periods of time without sharing a single glance, only to come to an abrupt stop nose to nose. Gat balanced, seated in the chair of Assaf's lap, his feet curled around Assaf's ankles as Assaf walked slowly, one heavy step after another; the men traversed the stage walking on their knees, continuing

so long we forgot they once had longer legs, approaching each other as if to connect, but passing shoulders without a glance. The final image was particularly striking. In a bright wash of light at the front of the stage, the two writhed and wriggled across the floor, isolated and struggling, continuing until the last and sudden gasp of the lights blacking out.

The American Dance Festival's Israeli Festival continues with the presentation of Ohad Naharin's "Decadance," performed by the Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet (June 25-27).

Anne Morris MFA Candidate (To contact this reviewer use the email contact on our 'Contact Us' page.)

© Copyright World Dance Reviews 2009

[Return](#) to previous page.

---

[About](#) -- [Advertising](#) -- [Contact Us](#) -- [Homepage](#) -- [Letters](#) -- [Submit Letters](#)  
[Links](#) -- [Resumes](#) -- [Reviews](#) -- [Review Archives](#) -- [Search](#) -- [Submit Reviews](#)

This site is free and open to any and all interested persons.

If you want to tell us who you are we would love to know that.

You can register with this site by sending an e-mail [here](#)

We will gladly provide you with information on site updates,  
but, if you do not want to receive any emails just indicate that in your message.

WEB SITE BY .  
CONTACT  SeeringMedia

Please send technical questions or comments about this site to the [WebMaster....](#)