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adf: cedar lake contemporary ballet

Decadance 2007 (photo by Paul B. Goode)



By Rosie Gaynor

It's easy to understand why Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet set aside three months to learn *Decadance 2007*. The dancers didn't just have to internalize the philosophy and style of Israeli

choreographer Ohad Naharin; they had to master excerpts from ten of his works. Think that's easy? As Naharin puts it on his company's website, each piece is "a different playground with a different set of rules."

"Playground" aptly describes the mood of CLCB's *Decadance 2007* performances last weekend at the [American Dance Festival](#) in Durham, North Carolina. Everyone onstage plays, with the commitment and imagination of uninhibited children. They create one convincing world after another: we see a sacred-to-savage ritual, we meet a girl discovering the perverse joys of adolescent rebellion, we see a be-thonged-and-be-feathered woman on stilts lip-synching an [Yma Sumac mambo](#) with nasty relish, we sit in a circle of men who seem to be mulling over the Torah and responding with flailing outbursts of ecstasy to "[Echad mi Yodea](#)"... What makes this collage of scenes and songs (more than 20, ranging from an [eerie marimba étude](#) to the "Hawaii Five-O Theme," from [Stabat Mater](#) to '60s Italian lounge music) cohere is Naharin's movement language, Gaga, which he developed at his [Batsheva Dance Company](#), partly in order to increase his own mobility after he sustained a back injury.

Decadance 2007 opens with an excerpt that could serve as a basic lesson in Gaga. Fourteen or so dancers stand still, in two lines, under chiaroscuro lighting, looking slightly on edge in the quiet, until they all find release by throwing out an isolated twitch together. Was it the ribs? The shoulder? We have time to consider the possibilities, as we wait for the next move. This is not to say that Gaga drags: "We are aware of our explosive power," says Naharin, "and sometimes we use it." A few moments later, individual dancers erupt into contortions made up of hundreds of spasms, some huge, some infinitesimal, some external, some seeming to happen deep inside.

Decadance 2007 (photo by Paul B. Goode)



CLCB performs in front of the audience in this work, rather than to the audience, exceptions being a solo improvisation onstage during intermission; a section where the entire cast vamps to a [jaunty Nubian tune by Ali Hassan Kuban](#) in their underwear, grinning at the audience; and the moment when the house lights go up and, to a rave rendition of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," dancers breach the audience to choose partners for the next few songs. *There's a land that I dreamed of...* where everybody dances?

In one sense, Naharin achieves this dream. People left the theater dancing, some externally, some deep down inside.

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