

BWW Review: KESHET CHAIM DANCE ENSEMBLE INTERPRETING THE RAINBOW OF LIFE, LOVE AND OPTIMISM THRU DANCE at Gindi Auditorium

by Valerie-Jean Miller Sep. 12, 2018



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The Rainbow, as a symbol, is realized through the KESHET CHAIM DANCE COMPANY with Special Guest Artists, DANCE STUDIO 84 ~

Rainbows speak directly to our hearts and souls. They bring the promise that the troubles of today will surely come to pass, and if you hold strong to your faith and vision, there will be new beginnings, new prosperity.

On a foggy September evening up atop Mulholland Drive, at a beautiful location, environment and atmosphere, at the lovely Gindi Auditorium of The American Jewish University, "Keshet @ 36, an Anniversary Celebration" took place to commemorate 36 years of art and entertainment.



Keshet Chaim Dance Ensemble, a professional non-profit organization is excellently mentored by Eytan Avisar, the Artistic Director and Choreographer, and Genie Benson, the Executive Director.

Their purpose; to explore the spiritual meaning of life, drawing from their Jewish roots and creating emotional and

spiritually-fulfilling choreography. The pervasive mood for the entire evening was joyous, uplifting and celebratory. The whole program was meticulously and lovingly put together so well; from the Venue, the Lighting, the Costuming, the Staging, the Choreography, the Music, the Orchestrations, the Direction and the carefully planned varied Presentation.

The incredibly strong and technically proficient yet lithe and interpretive Keshet Chaim Dancers and the remarkable Dance Studio 84 Dancers, and the amazing vocalists, Ameet Kanon and Oshri Elmorich all gave stellar performances. Dance Studio 84, the visiting junior Dance Troupe from Valencia, CA was thoroughly focused as a unit and passionate in their performances.



Throughout the program there are different scenic videos playing on a giant screen all the way upstage as background to what each song or music is expressing. There are also quotes, sayings, verses and words to some of the songs projected, with ever-changing lighting and graphic patterns. Perfectly executed, with much credit to **Brandon Baruch**, the Lighting Designer, Tal Azulay, Video Projections, Dori Roberts, Sound Engineer, Max Brother, Technical Director, and Sammy Silberstein, Graphic Design.



The music, the songs and the orchestrations were exemplary, with credit to Avli Avliav, an award-winning songwriter, composer, producer and pianist.

The costumes were magnificent. Some wardrobe was extremely elaborate with beautiful blending of colors, patterns, sparkle and gems; other costumes were simple, effective, with more muted color

combinations, but made with specific materials that enable the dancers to move freely, and were always perfectly suited to the lighting and mood of each piece. Sue Avisar is credited in the Program as Costume Mistress, and I tip my tutu and tiara to her for her brilliant work.

Gary Benson was the Voice Over Announcer for the evening, and has the perfect voice for such things. Very informative, official, friendly and articulate.

Kobi Rozenfeld is the Resident Choreographer for the Company. I can't say enough about how much I enjoyed watching his beautiful creations. Every dance and performance was very moving, with impeccable technique throughout the entire evening. The Guest Performers, the Dance Studio 84 group, who appeared twice in the program, was choreographed in one number, by Kobi, and the other, by Deanna Mondello, who capitalized on achieving what most dancers dream of, to exude deep emotions through the bodies of these very young and talented dancers, their instruments, all the while in perfect unison and lovely, precise technique.



The program began with a solo dancer, the sublime Amir Yorke, performing to a song of prayer, Shir LaMa' alot (Song of Ascents)" sung by Ameet Kanon and Oshri Elmorich. Amir's gorgeous technique, flexibility, airy leaps, controlled extensions and beautiful lines were truly inspirational and he is definitely a dancer to watch! He has a bright future, I am sure, and finished the number with a glorious grande a la seconde' leap before exiting.



The next piece was performed by the Studio 84 Dancers, to a song by **Celine Dion**, called "Surrender." Kobi Rozenfeld choreographed an impelling and visually breathtaking number that was uplifting and hopeful.

Jerusalem of Gold gave us a beautiful picture of the City and its meaning throughout history. Truly danced from the heart, there were beautiful adagio sections and partner work, as well as wonderful changing formations and placement.



The expressive vocalist, Ameet Karon, performed next, with an incredible range



and an edgy yet soothing sound to her timbre. She sang "Im Telech (If You Left)," and "Ani V'Ata (Me and You)." Following



that was a thoroughly enjoyable portrayal, "Chassids, Next Gen," of feisty yeshiva students teaching their Chassidic rabbis some hip-hop and other new moves. The rabbis had an extra piece in their wardrobe; black, shiny silk jackets, which gave the feeling of a new feel coming in from the younger generation that they were adapting to. Lighthearted and fun for both dancers and audience.



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"Notza Baruach (Feather in the Wind)," was danced compassionately by **Aaron Czuprenski** and Micaela De Pauli. To close the first Act, the KC Drummers, with creation and choreography/music of the body percussion (love that description) and stick sections, by Navon Amos, and the towel-ography and hip hop sections were choreographed by Shai Mizrahi.

Such a unique number, and full of capturing the folk dances from many cultures alongside with a fascinating "slapping" section, very precise and intricate, some strong movements by the male dancers that would likely be described as "dancing they would do in "Fiddler on the Roof."

Act II began with quite a celebratory dance piece, entitled "Sababa Ba Midbar (Party in the Desert)" which speaks to the survival of the Jewish people in the desert for 40 years and turning that into strength and spiritual connection giving



them cause for joy and celebration. The dance movements were exciting, engrossing and innovative. I have to say, each piece was very different from the last, and the program really flowed nicely.



Studio 84 dancers performed a very touching second piece to "Say A Little Prayer." So wonderful to see younger dancers perform so well; they are diamonds in the rough.



There was then a video presentation showing the comraderie and closeness of the company, highlighting the educational functions that the AJU offers, including student workshops and other programs that reach far and wide to multi-cultural communities.

The next piece was about a dream of soaring through clouds over the desert, entitled "Desert Sunrise."

It afforded the Company a chance to really shine and show off their wares. Aerial acrobatics and tumbling were mingled with a touch of belly dancing, many technically difficult dance steps; i.e. double a la seconde' turns, double pirouettes by the whole company in unison, layout developpes' and beautiful unique lifts and partner work.



Oshri Elmorich performed the song "Shema Yisrael (Oh Hear Ye Israel)" with much aplomb and has a beautiful high, clear voice that sounds so heartfelt; with a melodious piano solo and gorgeous violin section, he also moves freely to the rhythm and uses his voice from deep within.



"Small Gifts (Matanot K'tanot)" was a stunning quartet of dancers; Angela Bergmo, Micaela De Pauli, Amir Yorke and Robert Gomez, who enacted a love song about past memories. It was impeccably done and one of the best pieces of the evening.

Ameet Kanon sang another wonderful song, "Artzeinu Hakrtantonet (Our Small Land)," with much fervor and meaning. She exudes a lovely quality of joy she emits while performing.



The closing piece of the evening, "Hineni Kan (Here I Am)," was a beautiful mixture of a pas de deux, performed by Daniel Valentine and Micaela De Puli, which was very expressive, playful and lovely to watch, with Oshri Elmorich singing vocals, and the addition of the entire company on stage doing energetic, athletic and adventurous choreography.



Emotions evoked through the movement was one of the most enjoyable discoveries I made, watching these performers. They are infused with deep emotions that are part of their experience studying their faith and their artistic endeavors and performing in a safe, nurturing environment.

The two main singers were both so engrossing, and passionate, besides

having the most glorious, expressive voices, that they enhanced the in-between moments where there was no dancing, and took us to another place all together with just their voices and the gorgeous orchestrations that accompanied them. I would love to see this same Dance and Musical Concert with a full Live Orchestra, at a venue like the Ahmanson, or perhaps the Hollywood Bowl.



There were many cultures represented within the two cohesive Dance companies. It represented what a live rainbow on this earth would look like, made of human spirits, hearts' desires and purpose.

I was very moved by the presentation to a most fascinating woman, Holocaust survivor Sidonia Lax, who was given a silver-and-gold figure, an exquisite award statue of two dancers, intertwined and sculpted; The "Keshet Award" for her "non-stop spirit and generosity." She was absolutely delightful in accepting it.

Getting to the end of a Rainbow is a symbol for the celebration of fulfillment. This performance gave me that feeling from each and every one of the performers.



Bravo! to the excellent Keshet Chaim Dancers: Angela Bergamo, Joshua 'Leo' Burrell IV, Janelle Cruz, **Aaron Czuprenski**, Micaela DePauli, Robert Gomez, Shai Mizrahi, Morgan Mulholland, Daniel Valentine, the previously mentioned Amir Yorke, and another standout performer, Tammie Johnston.

Photos courtesy of Michaela Todaro.