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Keshet For Life - A Celebration of 25 years

By Serita Stevens



Keshet Chaim Dance Ensemble
Photo credit: Elazar C. Harel

The **Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza** lit with the joy of life as Keshet For Life performed on Sunday night, February 1 at 7 pm at the **Fred Kavli Theatre**.

As powerful and polished as River Dance, Stomp, Celtic Ladies or any of the other professional dance touring companies, **Keshet Chaim Dance Ensemble** (Keshet for Life or Rainbow for Life) celebrates its 25th year of dancing. A contemporary American Israeli dance troupe, it provides a rainbow of music and dance celebrating Jewish worldly events. The evening was enriched by the mysterious beats of the Middle Eastern drums performed by **Naked Rhythm** percussionists **Alex Spurkel** and **Avi Sills**, who accompanied the dancers with the universal language of rhythm from places such as South America, Africa, and India.

As the skirts flowed and the men jumped, the costumes by **Nili Glazer**, **Sue Avisar**, **Chen Marciano**, and make up by **Tamara Goldstein** created atmospheres of mystery and excitement.

Begun under the direction of **Eytan Avisar** and assisted by

executive director **Genie Benson**, Keshet has bloomed like the Israeli desert, absorbing songs, dances and music from Jewish cultural life in many lands. The Diaspora (diffuse Jewish communities around the world) is the source of their inspiration and the company has created songs of prayer – Adon Olam, Shir Lammalot (Palm 121) and Anachnu Maaminim, to historical works – Queen of Sheba, Shuva Israel “the Return”, From Spain to Jerusalem; cultural works – The Yemenites, Jerusalem of Gold, Shedemati (My Field) and The Voice of Peace (an ode to Yitzhak Rabin’s memory) and the Finale – Yachad. There was even a hip hop version of one dance combined with good old Country Western music.



Keshet Chaim Dance Ensemble
Photo credit: Sammy Silberstein



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Members of the dance troupe, all of whom have “regular” jobs and come to practice a minimum of two nights each week, range in age from 15 -64. Since its inception in 1983, people have flitted in and out, but those who love dance always came back to rest in the center of this pseudo family. Members themselves are a mix of cultures, races and experiences united by their love of dance and music.

The company continues to grow, taking auditions and creating new dances. The newest choreographer, who perfected most of last night’s dances, was **Kobi Rozenfeld**. Other works were by **Eytan Avisar**, **Tsion Marciano**, **Ilana Cohen**, **Oded Mansura** and **Erica Goldman**. Composers of the show’s original music included **Uri Ophir**, **Sharon Farber**, **Itzik Levy**, and **Alon Danin**.



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Only last year (2008) the company was commissioned to create nine new works including a premier at Kodak Theatre in honor of Israel’s 60th birthday. They’ve also performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall and Paramount Studios and have done various television events as the PBS special on Hanukkah. Its goal is to combat anti Semitism through entertainment, and judging the vast array of people in the audience, it did just that.

Photos and back drops for the performances were done by **Sammy Silberstein**, **Gerald Sanders**, **Elazar Harel**, **Jim Resiman** and **Peter Halmagyi**.

Tickets for last night’s performance ranged from \$35-\$75.

I personally hope to see them many times again.

For more information go to www.kcdancers.org or call 818 986 7332.