



Transcript of ZviDance at Jacob's Pillow

Review by Seth Rogovoy

WAMC "The Roundtable"

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Joe: We're now going to go on to Jacob's Pillow. You were there last night.

Seth: I was there last night to see ZviDance, which is at the Doris Duke Studio Theater, the second stage there, and this was an amazing program. If there are any tickets left for ZviDance this weekend, and it runs, I believe, through Sunday, you want to get on the phones right now and call Jacob's Pillow and grab those tickets, because this I predict is going to be one of the best shows of the year at Jacob's Pillow and anywhere. O.K.?

Joe: Terrific!

Seth: Choreographer and Artistic Director Zvi Gotheiner: he was born and raised in Israel and his company, ZviDance, is international in character and scope. The dancers originate from such far-flung places as Singapore, Taiwan, Austria, Salt Lake City (which is another country, right?), North Carolina, Indiana, Iowa and San Francisco, so you really have quite a broad base of backgrounds, all feeding in to ZviDance. But, and equally as important, the choreographer has a background as a musician, and he draws on music from all over the world. There is Russian, Brazilian, Indian, African, European and American influences on all the music in the three dances that we heard, that we saw last night. But what he does, he combines all of these different influences with elements drawn from classical ballet, modern, folk and jazz into a real personal language and vocabulary, a vivid, muscular approach to dance which is brimming with energy, indeed is very much about energy. Because in some of the dance or some of his vocabulary, it's really about the transfer of energy from one dancer to another. I mean, you can sit there, Joe, and do this as I say this. You can sit there and you can lift your arm, right? And so there is a real transfer of energy going there, and it's somewhat of a fluid motion, especially with somebody as graceful as you, right?

Joe: Thank you very much for noticing!

Seth: O.K. well, imagine then. You do that and it just gets picked up and transferred totally in a beautiful, graceful arc to another person. Right? Well, that's what we saw a lot of last night, but with real muscularity and strength and speed; just beautiful technique that these dancers had. It's, on the one hand, somewhat experimental and edgy, but what's amazing about what Gotheiner does is it's utterly accessible, too. And I think that's partly because of his background as a musician. He really, unlike a lot of other modern dance, his dances really communicate with the music. They're having a conversation there, so it's not like they're literally dancing to the music, but it's never far from the music and it really makes a lot of use of the music, so that what's going on relates to it. So, for example, some people maybe are afraid of modern dance, and I know some people are because it's kind of weird and hard to understand and you don't know what's going on.

Joe: Right.

Seth: This is a great way to get your feet wet. To go to this, and one thing to pay attention to is simply the relationship between the dance and the music, which, as I say, gives you something to grab on to. It's not literal but it's very creative and there's a real, obvious connection there. But on the other hand, he takes that music and he really re-interprets it and has more to say about it through the dance and does create little vignettes or stories or that kind of thing that goes on. He's very fond of still life tableaux. All of a sudden a group of dancers will freeze in formation and beautiful still life and then they will break out into life again. He's fond of setting all the dancers up in a straight chorus line in front of the audience, and they're kind of in your face, really spectacular things that run through several of the dances.

It's a company of equals. There is no real star among them. They all could be stars in any way. But there was one who really stood out. Or, you know, another thing to do when you go to a dance like this is to just find someone early on who grabs you in one way or another and you watch that person throughout the evening if, as I say, you're not really sure what to look at. And this one dancer, who I believe it was Ashley Gilbert (I'm not sure because you're not always sure who is who, but I'm pretty sure it was her), she grabbed me early on, she's extremely tall. Oh, one really amazing thing about this company is they range from very short to very tall, and this woman is as tall as, or almost as tall as the tallest man, very spectacular and very strongly built, and she grabbed my attention in the first dance and I just watched her throughout, and she's fascinating. The dancers make great use of their faces, too, which is not always the case in dance.

So as I said, this is really I think bound to be one of the best shows at Jacob's Pillow this summer and probably the best cultural experience anywhere this summer. Zvi Dance at Jacob's Pillow through Sunday.