



The Collaborationists: ADF's Fourth Program

by Kate Dobbs Ariail

June 16, 2008, Durham, NC: The [American Dance Festival](#) continues its series of so-far stellar curated programs with a mix of three very different companies this week in Duke University's Reynolds Theater. The apparent link among them is the artists' dedication to collaborative process in developing their works...

The program redeems itself after intermission with [Zvi Dance](#)'s thrilling version of *Les Noces*, set to the fantastic Stravinsky music, with its complex percussive rhythms and unstoppable flowing force. The Zvi work (from 2006) is not art about art so much as it is art that has fed on art and grown to greater glory. *Les Noces* (roughly translated, The Wedding) has a fascinating history. Serge Diaghilev of the Ballets Russes commissioned the score from Stravinsky, and it took him nearly 10 years to complete. Diaghilev had intended for the dancer Nijinsky to choreograph the work, but it ultimately fell to his sister Bronislava Nijinska. Music and dance premiered in 1923, and remain in ballet repertory today. (For a comprehensive history of Nijinska's *Les Noces*, click [here](#).)

Choreographer Zvi Gotheiner, in collaboration with his ten whole-hearted dancers, has drawn on Nijinska's work, with its folk-motifs and circle dances, while jettisoning the Russian village wedding story in favor of a contemporary exploration of courting, mating, fighting and loving. But he has also drawn on other choreographers' work to the propulsive score. Jerome Robbins premiered his version in 1965, and his influence is clear in this work. I think there may even be direct quotes. It appears that Gotheiner may also have picked up something from French choreographer [Angelin Preljocaj](#), who used benches in his 1989 version, and a sequence in which the dancers leap from the benches to fall and roll — very like the Zvi Dance version. These quotations, far from being plagiaristic, exemplify the goals of learning from history — and make a very suitable addition to the ADF's summer-long history survey.

The dancing in this version of *Les Noces* is magnificent. I think you'd have to be dead for this music not to charge your every blood cell with explosive energy, but behind the physicality of it is Stravinsky's implacable intellect, and that must be danced, too. These consummately musical dancers are right there with the score in all its demanding glory, and their style — open-chested, arm-flinging, leg-kicking, loose-waisted, high-headed, and deeply attentive — comes as an immense relief after the prissy carryings-on of the previous work. And in the unceasing flow of movement, *Les Noces* brings us circling back to *Rust*. Eiko and Koma move so slowly you can hardly see it happening, but they are always moving. The Zvi dancers move *much* faster, but in this piece, like Eiko and Koma, they eschew any posed positions or tableaux for motion as continuous as the flow of breath. You could truncate this program to include only *Rust* and *Les Noces*, and feel you'd gotten full value for your ticket.