



CREATURES OF DANCE

A Podcast on Contemporary Dance in Israel

Yali Nativ & Iris Lana

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BoyzGirlz: Cowboys

**Masculinities in the works of Niv Sheinfeld & Oren Laor, Gilad
Jerusalmy, Yossi Berg & Oded Graf; Roy Assaf and Adi Boutrous**

Episode 4

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With

Niv Sheinfeld & Oren Laor Dancers and choreographers

Gilad Jerusalmi Independent choreographer for the stage
and media

Dotan Brom Scholar - the history of the LGBT+ community in Israel/Palestine

Ran Brown Head of the dance program at Telma Yellin high school for the arts, independent
dance researcher and dance critic for Haaretz newspaper

Yair Vardi Founder and CEO of the Suzanne Dellal Centre in Tel Aviv (1987- 2020)

Recorded 2020

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IRIS: *Le Spectre de la rose*, Monte Carlo in the French Riviera, 1911. Imagine the French audience watching a performance by the Ballet Russes – Václav Nijinsky breaks into the stage in awe-striking jumps, covered in pink rose petals, making soft gestures with his hands. Is it a man? A woman? A flower? It is hard to tell. The girl sleeping in the chair, who is she dreaming of? And on a side note, who is the spectator dreaming of? Some of the rose petals fly off and fall across the stage; They will be later sold as souvenirs. And the image of the rose, with its daring gender fluidity, will persist in the dance repertoire of the 20th century, giving rise to a new discourse contributing to the myths surrounding Nijinsky – a male dancer, a star, a virtuosic acrobat, who paved the road for the male ballet dancers who followed in his footsteps: Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov. *Le Spectre de la rose* was, by no accident, one of the first dances performed by Nureyev after defecting the USSR in 1961. Nijinsky was also the first choreographer of *The Rite of Spring*; a choreographer of only three works, a bisexual who was Sergei Diaghilev's lover and married Romola, the writer of his biography, and who left the Ballet Russes in a huff and was finally hospitalized for schizophrenia until his death in 1950. Nijinsky is the greatness and the insanity, pioneer

of performative gender fluidity, all which have shaped the image of the male dancer in the public consciousness of the 20th century.

HOST: You are listening to Creatures of Dance – a podcast on contemporary dance in Israel. Creatures of Dance with Iris Lana & Yali Naiv. And on this episode – Boysgirls-Cowboys – Masculinities, with the participation of choreographers Gilad Jerusalmy, Niv Sheinfeld and Oren Laor, Dotan Brom, scholar of the history of the LGBT+ community in Israel/Palestine, and our regular guests, Yair Vardi, director of the Suzanne Dellal Centre until 2020, and Ran Brown, independent researcher and dance critic for the Haaretz newspaper.

Iris Lana is a dance researcher, a lecturer at the Academy for Dance in Jerusalem and at The Kibutzim College in Tel Aviv. She was the head of the Batsheva Dance Company's Archive Project and a Content Manager at the digital conservation project of dance collections at The Israel National Library. Iris is the General Director of the Diver Festival.

Dr. Yali Nativ teaches and researches dance in sociological and anthropological contexts. She is a senior lecturer at ASA, The Academic College of Society and the Arts, and writes about art education, sociology of body, movement and performance, and about dance and Israeli society. Her current research examines ageing professional dancers. Yali is the chairperson of the Israeli Choreographers Association.

This episode is narrated by: Natalie Fainstein, Avia Spitzer, Josh Becker, Yiftach Mizrahi, Zach Cohen, Nitzan Sitzer and Michael Rose.

IRIS: Hi Yali

YALI: Hi Iris

IRIS: What does it mean to be a male dancer? Is it even worth talking about? Some choreographers, both male and female, do not openly address gender in their work – Merce

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Cunningham is an example. But in dance we see a body, and the body is a text, and this text exists within a culture, and culture attributes crucial meaning to our identities as men or women. So yes, this gender is a powerful key, and in this episode, we will use it to look at Israeli contemporary dance works. We will discuss works by choreographers and dancers who openly reflect on their male identities and representations, such as *4 Men, Alice, Bach and the Deer* by Yossi Berg and Oded Graf from 2009, a dance work that was described by cultural critic Omri Hertzog as ""a concentrated, intensive, compressed capsule of masculine demonstration"". The work presents a catalogue of masculine gestures, and tells a story of four men friends and the inherent violence of their friendship. Berg and Graf use face masks to unmask the constructive clichés of manhood, retelling of the terrible story of 'little red riding-hood' and the wolf, exposing the destructive power of male-female stereotypes. But before we go further to discuss other dance works, let us take a step back and ask: what does it mean to be a male dancer? what kind of challenges do male dancers face?

Here's a quote by a woman ballet teacher saying: "When a woman dances, nobody cares... All women can dance. But when a man dances, now that's something". This quote appears in a research by American anthropologist and dance scholar Judith Lynn Hanna, who argues that men dancers, being a minority group within the dance world, enjoy significant advantages. They start dancing relatively late in terms of age, they receive special attention from teachers, they are promoted into the professional scene much quicker than women are, and they face much lower expectations as far as experience and capabilities.

YALI: At the same time, we know that entering the dance world is never easy for boys; there is always some eyebrow-raising. At a younger age, boys are much less encouraged to dance in comparison with girls, and sometimes they are pressured not to. It is not always the case, there are always exceptions, but this is the norm.

Dance – as we have mentioned in the previous episode, is perceived as a feminine domain; and the dancing body, especially when it is a man's body, carries a cultural baggage of multiple gender-related premises: it is marked as weak and effeminate, representing the

antithesis of the alpha male, and may be insinuated as – gay or sissy. in addition, the eternal question which keeps hovering above all male dancers will always be: is he gay or straight? When I conducted interviews for my PhD research in high school dance programs, in 2004, I interviewed one boy out of 100 girls who danced in three different programs. We were sitting in a café in the city of Bat Yam, talking about what it meant to be a boy dancer. Suddenly he pushed the microphone aside, bent forward and whispered in my ear: "Look, everybody thinks I'm gay because I am a dancer, and it's true, I am gay, but it's totally off the record.

We discussed this issue with dancers Gilad Jerusalmy, Niv Sheinfeld, Oren Laor and Yair Vardi.

IRIS: Gilad Jerusalmy is an independent dance artist who creates dance for the stage and for digital media. Hi, Gilad.

Gilad Jerusalmy: Hi

IRIS: What does it mean to be a male dancer, and what does it mean to be a male dancer in Israel?

Gilad Jerusalmy: I have been very preoccupied with this question, I must say, especially now. It is a very dynamic and changing experience, of course. I feel there are two big experiences of this thing, of being a male dancer in Israel. One is outside of the dance world; that is, the way I experience it as a person who is out on the streets, meeting people, living within Israeli macho culture; there's also a specific experience within the queer culture. Then, there is the experience inside the dance world, which is quite different.

IRIS: So, I would like you to describe your experience as a male dancer in Israeli society, not inside the dance community, but in general.

Gilad Jerusalmy: So this is really a very different experience. It involves declaring that "I am a dancer", saying it to whoever I meet on the street, to my landlady, in all everyday interactions. Every time it's like saying "I'm gay" and then having to face the reactions and the eyebrow-raising. And then face the "oh really, so show us a dance". If I state it as a fact in a conversation, then I also have to face questions about how I make a living, (for example) when I signed the contract for the apartment I live in now in Tel Aviv, everything went well, until the landlady found out I was a dancer, and it seemed so odd to her, because my father is a doctor. So she asked me why I did not take over the clinic, since that would have been the natural thing to do, and it sort of undermined her trust in me, although in the end she went along with it...

IRIS: You mentioned the close association between being a dancer and being gay – could you say more about it?

Gilad Jerusalmy: I think that as far as stigma and the stereotyping are concerned, absolutely, especially in Israel. I've danced in Europe and studied there and in the US as well, and I feel that being a male dancer is far more accepted there, the definition is much wider and much more fluid. The fact that you are a dancer does not imply necessarily anything about your sexual orientation; but here, society makes this association, not that there's anything wrong with that – I'm a dancer and proud, and I'm gay and proud, but this is still a country of football for boys and dance for girls, even if it seems different in our inner circles as dance people.

YALI: There are many male dancers in Israel today, right? How do you explain that, considering what you've just said? Do you think something has changed in recent years?

Gilad Jerusalmy: I can only speak from my personal experience, of course, I didn't research the topic, but I think things are changing as we speak. This is really my interpretation and the

way I feel. I feel that I am at the end of a generation of male dancers who started dancing late in terms of age, after the army service. I think that many of my male colleagues started after the age of 20. Now, there's a lot of charm, grace and a certain roughness to it, and it brings a flavor of extra machismo and sexiness of the unrefined man that we still praise, which is fine with me as it worked in my favor in the end; but today I am refined. And I feel there are more and more young dancers today who at 18 already graduate from dance programs in high schools and start their professional careers, just like many female dancers who started as little girls and kept dancing through high school and so on. I do feel that today there are more and more male dancers, but I still feel that in my generation (and I am only 31) it's relatively rare; I can probably name all of them, and probably tell their life stories. There is a certain familiarity between us.

IRIS: It's interesting; you say that there are more male dancers, but I think that even if there are, there are still not many.

Gilad Jerusalmy: yes, that's true.

YALI: I think that in Israel, the fact that Israeli folk dances is a long-standing traditional practice in schools, in the Kibbutzim, the army and youth movements; and the fact that many adults in Israel – women and men, fathers and mothers – participate weekly or monthly in public folk dance events, makes it easier for boys to enter the Israeli professional dance scene, and this was even more so for the older generation. The association of folk dance with nationalism and patriotism legitimizes the practice dance for men in Israeli society, unlike what happens when boys show interest in classical ballet, for example, or in modern dance. Sports is another path for boys into professional dance, and men who had played basketball or practiced gymnastics report it was a good starting point for them to enter the dance world. Another factor that legitimizes the entrance of men to the dance scene is when they become professional and dance with a company, even with a relatively low technical level; this status gives them some sort of a reputation and a prestigious social capital.

HOST: Yair Vardi, founder and CEO of the Suzanne Dellal Centre in Tel Aviv, 1987- 2020

IRIS: Yair, we would like to ask you about perceptions of gender in dance in the history of Israeli concert dance. You joined the Batsheva Dance Company in 1967, but we would like to go back a little further, to the time you started dancing in the Kibbutz and made the transition from folk dance to modern dance. What was dancing in the Kibbutz like for you as a young boy and how this transition was perceived?

YAIR VARDI: It was accepted with understanding, open-mindedness and sympathy. Like you said, I started with folk dancing with my peers in the Kibbutz. At the time our dilemmas and conversations revolved around our position in the Kibbutz: Who are we? What are we? The Kibbutz approached dance of any kind with a great deal of respect, I must say. We would create choreographies, put on shows, graduation ceremonies at school etcetera, so our desire to dance, perform and create was part of the productive life of the Kibbutz. It wasn't taken for granted that a young man should dance, but I was also an athlete, a football player, a basketball player, a swimmer. So, it all went hand in hand. I must say that my father was incredibly supportive, he also danced in the folk-dance festival in Kibbutz Dalia, so he had some good memories. All in all, I do not remember anybody giving me a hard time, on the contrary, there was always respect for me as Yair who wanted to dance.

IRIS: And when you started dancing other things, like modern dance with Ariela Peled? Did things change?

YAIR VARDI: No, it was very much the same. There were very few men there, perhaps three. All the women were older than us, but we felt great. Ariela will be young forever, and the classes were unique, with comprehension, and a strong emphasis on music. Understanding dance through music. And it was great because it enriched us and introduced us to new ways of thinking that we didn't even know existed. It was extremely helpful.

IRIS: Did you have performances with the studio?

YAIR VARDI: We performed at end-of-year ceremonies and it was a celebration. The whole Galilee would come. These were wonderful times, the pride of the Galilee.

IRIS: And when was the decision to become fully professional? When did you decide to choose dance as a profession?

YAIR VARDI: I think it all happened during my army service; a few different things came together. I felt I was attracted to this thing, to dance when I was kind of a semi-professional dancer at the Batsheva Dance Company, during the Six-Day War. During the army I managed to combine my three and a half years service, dancing with Batsheva. The company showed a lot of understating and support and helped me in this battle of maintaining my capabilities as a dancer, and staying fit and still completing my army duty. However, I don't think, I don't recall any one moment of deciding "now I am going to be a professional dancer"; I was drawn into this thing, one thing led to another, I met Moshe Efrati and Rina Sheinfeld... and they helped me a lot at the time as well.

YALI: How did the wider Israeli society accept you as a dancer? The dance world clearly received you with open arms, but were there other reactions, any eyebrow-raising?

YAIR VARDI: As I mentioned before, in the Kibbutz, which is a relatively traditional society, it was received with complete understanding, it wasn't an issue.

YALI: And outside of the Kibbutz?

YAIR VARDI: I didn't have much contact with the outside world. Other than the programs I have already mentioned – Ariela Peled's studio, the Batsheva Dance Company – I did not

have much contact, I do not recall any remarks or issues with my decision to dance, I remember a lot of respect, "Oh, you're a dancer? How wonderful." The Batsheva Dance Company was already well known in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was something that was brand new in the Israeli artistic and cultural landscape, we were all stars.

YALI: Dotan Brom is a researcher of gay and queer history in Israel. In his MA thesis, he discusses homosexuality in the Kibbutz and in the Israeli dance world through the life of dance critic Giora Manor. Dotan is also a founder of the Haifa Gay History Project.

Hi, Dotan, do you believe the common practice of Israeli folk dancing in the Kibbutz helped facilitate men's entrance into the artistic and professional dance scene?

DOTAN BROM: Everyone at the Kibbutz participated in folk dances, that is true; men, too. And not only folk dances; there were pageants for holidays and events, and the performers did not necessarily have any professional experience in dance. In that sense, you could say that yes, dancing in the Kibbutz was an experience that served as a bridge or an easier introduction into the professional dance world. On the other hand, there were also barriers, gender barriers. A man who practiced art in the Kibbutz, especially dance, risked being perceived as effeminate and perhaps gay, depending on the Kibbutz and the time, so this was not necessarily the way you wanted to introduce yourself in a Kibbutz. Even worse, anyone who pursued art professionally also risked being perceived as lazy or as a parasite, a blatant opposite of the ideal Kibbutz male, who worked the land and did not waste his time on art and other so-called "nonsense".

YALI:Your MA dissertation was about Giora Manor, who was one of the most important dance critics in Israel. He was also among the founders of The Dance Library and dance Archive of Israel and co-founded the annual journal dance in Israel which Ruth Eshel continues to publish to this very day under the name "Dance Today". Could you tell us about Giora's life in the Kibbutz and about his introduction to dance? and can you refer to his attitude toward male dancers?

DOTAN BROM: Giora Manor has always been a pretty marginal character in his Kibbutz, Mishmar HaEmek. He was respected for his intelligence, but socially he was never the center of events. He also spent a lot of time outside of the Kibbutz. He was an editor for the Al HaMishmar newspaper in Tel Aviv, and he would attend performances and spend some time abroad, which naturally made people in the Kibbutz envy him. But on the other hand, he was pitied for not having a family. People knew he was a homosexual and gossiped about it, but it wasn't the kind of thing you would discuss publicly. Regarding his introduction to dance, there are three potential moments: at the end of the 1950s he was involved with a woman named Zuki, who was a dancer and a choreographer, and also worked with actors on movement. He was a theatre director at the time, and she exposed him to the dance world. In 1966 he travelled to Denmark, to study television. He was supposed to participate in the foundation of the Israeli national television, and there he watched performances of the Royal Danish Ballet. In his autobiography he writes that this was when he first fell in love with dance. I think he is romanticizing it a bit, I believe the more significant introduction was in 1970, when he started writing for the cultural section of Al HaMishmar newspaper. Because the paper stopped covering theatre, which was his domain, he started writing about dance and had to study this world. You asked about his attitude toward male dancers; it is quite clear that he liked male dancers and male choreographers. I mentioned his trip to Denmark earlier; there he saw works by Fleming Flint, who was a choreographer of the Royal Danish Ballet in the 1960s. In his autobiography, he writes, and I quote: "The men were equal to the women dancers. The male dancer is more than a 'carrier' of the ballerina; he is an artist in his own right." And if you look at other texts he wrote, in a draft for an unpublished article, he writes about Nijinsky, that great dancer, the choreographer of the Ballet Russes, who became a symbol for masculine sexuality and for homosexuality in dance. And in this article, he refers to the tights Nijinsky wore and how they were a sensation in Russia, and one may assume that they were a sensation for Manor, too. In 1976 he wrote an article about Baruch Agadati – he would write a book about him later; Baruch Agadati was among the pioneers of Israeli dance, a dancer/choreographer who used his theatrical

personas to play with gender boundaries. In 2000, the Suzanne Dellal Centre presented *Behemot* (Beasts), choreographed by Ido Tadmor and others. Manor was not in the habit of writing negative reviews, but he did write such a review about this work titled ""Not So Kosher Beasts"" , and there, it's interesting, he argues that it is a purely male work, the artists and dancers are all men, but that perhaps it is a mistake, and that there is nothing new about it, that the association between male dancers and homosexuality is outdated. On the other hand, he complains that if one already decides to create such a work, why not let the audience enjoy the splendid bodies of these handsome male dancers, and I quote from his review: ""Trendy rules of lighting forbid that the lighting artist should illuminate the stage with anything but emergency lights, which hide more than they reveal. On the one hand, there was no real nudity to speak of, and on the other you could not enjoy the sight of the fine young men participating in the show. And I think this more or less sums up his feelings about male dancers.

IRIS: I'm describing a scene from the work *Two Room Apartment* by Niv Sheinfeld and Oren Laor, from 2012.

I am sitting very close to the rectangular stage, together with the other spectators. Niv Sheinfeld, the shorter of the two dancers, is standing, and Oren Laor is clinging to him like a baby, naked; his head is on Niv's shoulder in a heart-wrenching way. Elton John's "Yellow Brick Road" plays in the background.

It is a hug with all the humanity in the world, yet there is nothing cliché about it, I guess it's because of the size difference between their bodies and because of the nudity. And, they are two men. Indeed, we are in 2012, but homophobia is still here.

This is the most intimate, delicate moment of the performance, a moment which would not have been possible in the 1987 original performance by Liat Dror and Nir Ben Gal. It would have been too daring, and dance language was different.

Oren slides down slowly, lies on his belly, while moving his index finger scribbling on his sweat on the linoleum floor, while Niv sits and places his elbow on him. Then Ori Vidislavski's

military march returns; the music activates our imagination as spectators, brings us back to the beginning of the work, when both dancers were marching in their respective marked territories, which they had delineated in the beginning of the show with adhesive tape. Now, the music brings us back not only to the beginning of the performance, but also 25 years back, to the endless, repetitive and Sisyphean marching of Nir and Liat, a man and a woman, around their respective territories which were then defined by a 3-Dimensional metal construction. And this marching is the work of life and the making of relationships, routines and chores.

Niv and Oren's reconstruction of the work retrieves the original performance from our memory, as it highlights the distance between the original version and this one.

The repetitive marching, which draws the contour of the work, is disrupted by different events. Now Oren, which seems activated by the music just like we are, starts marching around the territory again – the common territory of both of them this time. He has already gotten dressed, slowly: a sock and another sock, putting on his military shoes and then his underwear. He pulls them up as he marches, adjusts it and performs the cliché, iconic masculine gestures of Nir Ben Gal – sniffs his armpits and scratches his balls. At the same time, Niv appears to be obsessively washing a shirt. Is he playing the feminine role of Liat Dror? The stereotypic male and female movements remerge, and they are intensified when Oren takes the washed shirt and pushes it into his underwear. Really? Could there be a more blatant cliché? But this is only to keep deconstructing the gender dichotomy. In a minute all of this will dissolve into silence, as they hold hands, look into each other's eyes and then into the audience's eyes, embarking on the last and final journey of the show. They smile, dancing hand in hand, and finally remove the adhesive tape which signified their home in loud and screeching noise. It was a performance, we are the audience and they are the performers, but they are also Niv and Oren. And they are so close to me.

YALI: In 1987, Nir Ben Gal and Liat Dror's *Two Room Apartment* won first prize in the Gvanim Be'machol Festival competition in Tel Aviv. This is how Liat Dror described it at the time: "it's

about two people: when they are together and when they are apart." She was talking of course about a man and a woman.

In 2012, 25 years later, Oren Laor and Niv Shienfeld presented a new version, different from the original one, in their approach to gender, age, space and movement working from a contemporary dance aesthetics.

At the time, Nir Ben Gal and Liat Dror's *Two Rooms Apartment* was surprising and cohesive, innovative for its time in its sincerity and directness. They were mundane on stage yet refined in their cool haircuts and black jackets. They were clearly influenced by the movement language of Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker of Rosas in the 80's, where we saw for the first time black high-top shoes and everyday clothes on stage. They were a unique, authentic voice, and the European influence only emphasized their Israeliness. In the new version of the work, Niv and Oren perform a re-enactment – a new practice and term in contemporary choreography, designating a reconstruction of a dance piece which reinterprets the original work. Re-enactments reflect on memory, on our attachment to the past, and on emphasizing differences.

IRIS: The original choreography was reshaped into Sheinfeld and Laor's bodies, but the changes did not end there – the choreographers changed the subtext, omitting movement and adding, sometimes unravelling structures and leaving loose ends and creating pauses for speech and observations, replacing exclamation mark with question marks, and reacting to new artistic ideas where virtuosity, perfection and eloquence have fallen from grace.

YALI: We spoke with Niv Sheinfeld and Oren Laor about the significance of being a male dancer in Israel.

OREN LAOR: We did a project in schools, with 4th graders, and in almost all the classes the boys didn't dance. Not even Hip Hop. They were embarrassed. The girls always go for it, and the boys always have issues. At least at that age. And one of the things we liked to do was to show them that here we are, two men male dancers coming to work with them. We didn't

mention the fact that we were life partners, of course, because of their age; it wasn't relevant. We performed for them a bit, and then we danced with them. But it was so clear that this is something inherent to Israeli society: boys will have difficulty participating; girls do not. So, we decided to take it as a project. We thought that the actual experience was important for the kids, not so much talking with them about gender or about anything else, but to do things in a way that will make them feel comfortable in their own skin when they dance and move and perform with their body in front of the class. Because for us, it feels very natural.

NIV Shienfeld: I can say that I started dancing in disco nights at the Kibbutz, and I would just dance for hours and get all absorbed in it; I wouldn't talk much or interact with others. On those days I already had the stigma of "Niv with all the girls", so when dancing, people did not give me strange looks, they accepted it. For me it was some sort of an escape, and later, when I already started dancing more professionally, it was my escape from the Kibbutz in some way. It was related to homosexuality for me, because both were involved with hiding.

OREN LAOR: For me, on the other hand, let me tell you a small anecdote. Unlike life in the Kibbutz, I grew up in the city, with a delicious mother who was a bit of a bohemian, so when I was eight years old, on my birthday, she took me by surprise to a midnight screening of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show".

IRIS: good education!

OREN LAOR: That's where it started. It explains a lot.

NIV Shienfeld: I practiced gymnastics and played the flute as well as a little bit of piano. So, I participated in all the ceremonies in the Kibbutz, where this union of the physical body, music and the dance was perfect for me. And again, disco nights at the kibbutz were some sort of an escape into this union - body and music. Then Liat Dror and Nir Ben Gal published

in one of the newspapers, I believe it was in 1991, an ad, announcing they were opening a dance class for boys. And I said, "wow, cool", and I joined. We were like 50 boys on the stage of Suzanne Dellal, or the Inbal Theatre, I don't remember exactly, and I simply started; and about a year later Nir came and asked me if I wanted to join the company. At the same time, I started taking classes with Rina Badash, she just returned to Israel from New York teaching evening classes at Thelma Yellin High School.

IRIS: When you worked on Liat Dror and Nir Ben Gal's *Two Room Apartment* 25 years later, how did you approach gender, in view of the fact that you were taking a work that was done by a straight couple?

OREN LAOR: We looked at *Two Room Apartment* and then we said, "why not". We realized there was a gender issue that was clearly highly significant and needed to be addressed in one way or another. But we liked the idea of taking a work that was so explicitly man-woman, where the roles also fit into these stereotypes in the work.

NIV Shienfeld: The woman does the laundry; the man goes to the army...

OREN LAOR: Exactly. So, we liked the idea of doing a version with two men, without treating it as if it were shocking "wow, now two men are going to do it"; No, we wanted to approach it as if it was natural, normal. This is what happens, and this is how we treat it onstage.

Once we started to take the work apart, that is, to study it, and deciding what we adopt and what we don't, what we will change and how, many of the gender issues became relevant to a relationship between two men. For example, if at a certain moment in the work the woman supposedly seems more emotional, weaker or capricious and the man is a solid rock, we didn't want to create an impression that in the relationship between two men there is a "man" and a "woman", so to speak. Because for us as a gay couple, it keeps changing, depending on the day and time. We are equally masculine and feminine. What does

"masculine" and "feminine" even mean? It moves between the female stereotype or the male stereotype because we do, too. So, it was also something we constantly had to cope with and think, how to constantly change the structure of who's stronger than whom, so that there is no moment when you can say "this is the man, this is the woman".

IRIS: This is a much more complex idea of the perception of masculinity and femininity, not a dichotomic one of yes, "this is a man, and this is a woman".

OREN LAOR: Exactly

YALI: I find it interesting, because on the one hand, you say there is an attempt to normalize your relationship as gay men, an agenda of bringing the homosexual relationship to the table in the work, and on the other hand, you want to ask questions about it. I find this tension interesting between normalization and yet asking the audience to consider gender roles in a relationship. What does it mean to be a woman in a relationship? What does it mean to be a man?

NIV Shienfeld: That's right, we took movement sentences, phrases of physical contact, gender roles, and we just switched between them; there is a lot of repetition in the work of this sort of gendered movement. We did fewer repetitions and yet, we switched roles because we simply wanted each one of us to be able to do these things both ways around. When we reached the part of what we call "the soldier and the laundry woman" about 30 minutes into the piece, there was a question: who does what, and maybe we need to create an actual conversation onstage. We do speak in this work and at that moment we really felt that we had already established an equal process which expressed a certain gender role complexity. So, we decided we could allow Oren to be the soldier this machismo, who goes to the army. We took the six movements from the original work, where Niv walks in rectangles and sniffs his armpits and scratches his balls, and I do the laundry, and then I enter a certain emotional space where I, as Niv, allow myself to embody this feminine

energy. I am a person who can get into this place, I can bring out that fire that is sometimes attributed to feminine hysteria and to this stereotypical image.

IRIS: And then Oren takes his clothes off. This is another switch, there is a constant switching of roles and this is also the grand moment of intimacy in the work.

OREN LAOR: That's right. This is a scene we took from Nir and Liat, and we confronted it from many different angles. One was that in the original scene Liat walks up to Nir, they are diagonally opposite to each other on stage, with a distance between them. Liat walks up to Nir and takes his clothes off slowly, a bit like a 'femme fatale' and then he is embarrassed. He doesn't want to take his pants off. She pulls them off and he pulls them back on, and then he clings on to her. I mean, there's something highly erotic there, some sort of seduction. We weren't kids when we made this work, we were older and mature and we said: "we are not going to show somebody seducing someone into bed". It's not right; also, because we wanted to create a scene that is in the present. Our present. What is the present that is happening here? And what is our relationship, as a couple, who is much older than those 25-year-old kids. So, in our version, Niv doesn't take my clothes off, I take them off myself and I take them off completely. Obviously, there is mental vulnerability here, not only a physical exposure. Physical exposure is a key to a state of spiritual exposure or codependency, because I get naked in front of him and another 100 people who sit around us. And then I cling on to Niv, and I am the heavier one you know, Niv is shorter than me.

NIV Shienfeld: This is the reason I am standing where I stand, by the way. I stand where Liat stood and Oren stands where Nir was standing, because I am slightly smaller physically.

OREN LAOR: And there was also the idea that because I have a more masculine look, so to speak, I am wider, bigger, more massive, I will be the weaker one, the dependent one. Here, too, we wanted to create a disruption of fixed gender perceptions on what is masculine,

what is feminine, what is aggressive, what is dependent. We kept working back and forth with these ideas and images.

IRIS: So, all of these were conscious choices.

I think that a keyword that was mentioned here is "present", that the whole work is actually constructed on the present tense, on concreteness, it is both of you out there, not a representation of you. It's Niv and Oren who are there onstage, it's like the change you made to the set design, which takes shape before our very eyes as audience, when you make the set – and it's not a set designed by a set designer on a proscenium stage. So, I think that this concreteness is a starting point for looking at this work.

YALI: I agree Iris, that it is about the present and about concreteness, but I also feel that it is a work about gender fluidity. Like you had said earlier, Oren, in everyday life neither of you have a fixed gender identity, one is a man and the other is a woman. You let yourselves fluctuate, just like in real life, like in this back-and-forth game that you've mentioned, and to me it's like a performative fluidity, that you practice in your everyday life and also bring to the stage.

OREN LAOR: That's very true., and I would like to go even further and connect what you said to what Iris had said earlier, about this present that is really us, which is a very tricky thing; in *The Third Dance*, too, which is a duet, we remade on another work by Nir and Liat. There is always an embedded question within the performative intention. From the one hand, we set the stage to look highly designed, as if it were to emphasize that it is really us and not "characters". On the other hand, it is also fluid, because we are still us yet engaged in this fake drama, and suddenly it's not the "real" us.

With such a fluidity within the performative process, we do want to construct a feeling of a present, that's the thing. We want it to feel like this is really taking place right now; and we

do it by leaving places that remain open, so there is still room for... it's not all about precise timing. The texts can change, where you go and so on. We consciously leave these gaps in the narrative and fill them with whatever the inspiration of that specific moment brings up.

IRIS: And you also drink water and wipe your sweat and your nose if you have to.

OREN LAOR: That's right.

IRIS: I want to ask you about your work *Cowboy* from 2015. In this piece there's a whole different discussion of gender and masculinity. What kind of masculinities are there, and how did you treat this angle, as a work that was created a few years after *Two Room Apartment*?

NIV Shienfeld: *Cowboy*; there are a few things. I told you earlier the story of myself as a boy wearing a dress and ballet shoes; for me it is some sort of a fantasy, something that most people will have hard time relating to; even those who are very close to me. You know, someone told me once: ""you should be onstage like you would like your mother to see you". And this is someone I appreciate and love but the reaction is still....so....

We were working with Gilad Yerushalmi, and Gilad brought to the studio something that really surprised us at first. We asked him to do this monologue and he did it in a very extroverted, almost feminine way, sometimes using feminine language.

OREN LAOR: A diva.

NIV Shienfeld: A diva, yes. And for us it was sort of intimidating at first, and we chose to include it in the performance and this, too, wasn't easy for some of the people.

OREN LAOR: It was intimidating, although this was exactly what we were looking for; and still we found it intimidating. Finally, we realized, - okay, this is our lesson here, we need to think, why do we find this intimidating. I mean, we are familiar with this phenomenon, we like drag a lot, and 15 years ago we even made a show in which I was in drag, Jorona. I was in drag onstage; so we obviously do like this kind of gender fluidity, so why does this suddenly make us react in some sort of horror?

IRIS: Why?

OREN LAOR: I think it's the last traces of our conservatism; This sort of: "wait a second, it's too much", you can be gay, but let's be Two Room Apartment, this kind of straight gays. And suddenly Gilad is not a straight gay, he's like full on, and not in a dress and in a drag wig, but as a man, and he looks like a man, with bristles, and here he is speaking in such a feminine manner.

NIV Shienfeld: And he can suddenly also bring this army commander. We did encourage him to bring that aggressive quality, to play with these extremities.

OREN LAOR: And then you realize that when you aim at something, when you want to send a message of a certain tolerance towards the audience, we too, still have a way to go with this thing. I already hugged my partner naked on stage, and here, I am, I still having some way to go in order to accept, let's say, other forms of expressions, to accept this gender fluidity which goes a step further than what I would have dared for myself in that given moment, so it was very instructive for us too.

NIV Shienfeld: We see our prejudices reflected in this thing, how prejudices are coded into the body, and it's not necessarily something you think and agree with in your mind. When you understand it logically, you understand and know it's something you believe in, and you do want to embrace it. Yet it still somehow intimidates you.

IRIS: This is a very brave position, to put it out there like this, that you still have some way to go; for me it means that none of us is free from prejudice.

YALI: Why is the work titled *Cowboy*?

OREN LAOR: I'll say it this way. First of all, we spent almost six months in the US with the Schusterman foundation, teaching at Rutgers university and living in New York. We saw many things, and one was a Square Dance night that included some cowboy dancing, and we felt like doing more of that; it was an actual research in fact. We watched a lot of cowboy dances and we composed something which actually became the opening for this work - *Cowboy*. When they asked us at the Festival in Tel Aviv, "so what is the work's title?", we didn't really have time to think of a name, so we just said: 'working title, Cowboy'.

NIV Shienfeld: The image of the cowboy is the opening image of the work. We wanted to make some sort of a connection between the cowboy who is the American pioneer, a very strong queer culture that developed later, and the Israeli pioneer of the Israeli folk dances showing my character playing Israeli folk songs on the flute; the connection between the cowboy masculine image we grew up with, and the image that disintegrates into a little girl with ballet shoes that I do, plus Gilad's gender fluidity, and the foreigner who stands there, and in fact screams out his frustration because he is not Jewish and for this reason he is never accepted here - all of these came together for us in this binary of masculinity and this world of power, where places of weakness and tenderness are not allowed for men.

OREN LAOR: I'll add that *Cowboy* is, first and foremost, a gay fantasy that is quite...

IRIS: common?

OREN LAOR: Yes, common.

IRIS: why?

OREN LAOR: It is a fantasy, but not just in the sense of being sexually aroused by this image, there is something about it, I am speaking for myself, but I'm sure it resonates for others as well; there is something in the image of this solitary man who spends days all alone in the mountains with his cattle, in this social isolation, of feeling you're inside a bubble. We have to remember that we grew up in a different Israel.... So, this feeling of isolation, of being all alone with your thoughts, with the mountains, with the cattle up there, there is something there beyond the fantasy of the rusty masculinity of the American man. But also, and it's like in *Brokeback Mountain*; that movie fits into this category in both senses: two handsome, sexy men, but also this isolation; you can see the entire process that is going through this man's mind in front of these mountains and so on, and the confrontation with the intolerant and disrespectful society.

IRIS: We are back with Gilad Jerusalemmy, to talk to him about *Cowboy*.

Gilad Jerusalemmy: I will start by saying that *Cowboy* was my first work as a professional dancer; I was a student in Austria and I happened to meet Niv and Oren in a workshop, and they really pulled me out of school to do this work and gave me the first opportunity to perform on a professional stage in Israel. It was really my premiere as a dancer in Israel, and I couldn't ask for a better starting point. To answer your question: the first instruction Oren and Niv gave me, which was really the basis for many things in this work, was "bring two or three dreams you have, things you want to do onstage and haven't had the chance to, bring them to the studio. And one of my biggest dreams from an early age was to be the host from the musical *Cabaret*, who is this weird gender-fluid creature, he is with men, he is with women, he is queer, he is in 1930s Berlin and he has these crazy texts and stunning numbers and that was my dream, my fantasy, and I brought that. I did a small number in the studio

and I ended up being the host of Cowboy; I think there was a lot of space for my gender fluidity in there. I define myself as a man, as a sis-man, which means I was born a male and I define myself as a man, but I do enjoy playing on the spectrum between femininity and masculinity and all these dimensions – whether it is Gilad who was an army commander and his voice [lower his voice] goes like this, or Gilad who speaks like a woman; and here I had opportunity to be 300 percent myself; this is also the magic of Niv and Oren, that they encourage it, they enable it and then they shape it as well. I think that like in many work processes, you develop as you work and discover a lot about yourself, at that moment in time, I was already very much intrigued by my gender, it's something that has accompanied me for years; and suddenly I had the platform to go all the way, which I did; to bring out the gogo-dancer, and the dominant, and to be this host and have fun, and talk about morbidity and be gentle, and this liberty to really be whoever you want.

IRIS: That's interesting, because when I spoke to Niv and Oren about Cowboy, they said your feminine talk was a challenge for them, and they talked about the process they went through with it, how they were intimidated by it at first and labelled it as something that was very problematic; but they still pointed that out, how meaningful the process they went through with you was for them.

Gilad Jerusalmi: Yes, they also discussed this with me. I think there is something that is very liberating about it, that you say – what is embarrassing about talking like a woman? Why does that embarrass us? There is something liberating about the actual talking. Today I am already on the opposite side; I am saying "wait, I only need to talk like a woman when it's positive, happy things". To cut it short, it's liberty, and god bless them, they also went along with me.

HOST: Ran Brown is an independent dance researcher, dance critic for Ha'aretz newspaper, and head of the dance program at the Thelma Yellin high school for the arts.

YALI: Let's talk about masculinity, which is an issue which came up in many of the interviews we conducted with men dancers and choreographers. What would you like to say about it, and which choreographers deal with this question? Can you give us a few examples?

RAN BROWN: Yes. So, masculinity is another interesting issue to examine in Israeli dance. An early work we may refer to is *The Hill* by Roi Assaf, from 2012, and it's interesting because it does not openly address masculinity. I think it deals with the army, an experience most Israeli men have, and this is precisely what's interesting: how this experience is entangled in Israeli dance with militarism and with the experience of loss; so, this is a work performed by three men, and the gun that fires in the first act is of course used again at the end. Therefore, there is death in the work. The work suggests an examination of masculinity that is almost inseparable from looking at militarism and nationality in Israeli society. This is done through the music that appears in this work, like the IDF anthem...

IRIS: "Givat Hatchmoshet".

RAN BROWN: "Givat Hatchmoshet", the Ammunition Hill song from 1967 the Six day War. Another work which addresses this issue is a work from 2017 by Yossi Berg and Oded Graf, titled *The Rite of Spring*, and it is of course an adaptation of Stravinsky's or Nijinsky's *Rite of Spring*, shifting it into the local sphere. This is another example of male-only cast on stage, four men this time, which deals in a different way from the previous one with representations of soldiers as an image of Israeli masculinity.

YALI: If I remember correctly, the work starts with Yossi emerging from underneath a yellow sheet, and then there is a series of sculpture-like situations, which reminded me of memorial monuments for war and heroism which we have a lot of in the Israeli public sphere. Can you refer to this as a starting point for discussing the work?

RAN BROWN: I was a dramaturg working with Yossi and Oded on this work, and one theme that was very much present in our dialogue, and also in the studio, was the image of the soldier in Israeli art or in Israeli cinema. As we were exploring this we found an article by historian George Musa, who discusses nationality and the worship of the dead soldier in Europe; it's very interesting to see how this ethos is intertwined with nationality and protects the traditional gender social order. In this sense, it's no accident that countries that experience a surge of extreme nationalism experience also the return of extreme chauvinism. It's no accident that they are closing the faculty for Gender Studies in Bulgaria right now, because protecting the good old order goes hand in hand with preserving gender roles and national boundaries. In *The Rite of Spring* by Yossi and Oded, part of the game we played was precisely our attempt to understand this bond between masculinity and nationalism. One of the things that's going on in the work is gender fluidity which is expressed through embodied alternations between multiple static, sculpture-like, familiar images, and the possibility of dissolving them to a more fluid, transient, changing image. This mechanism constantly re-emerges throughout the work and enables the manifestation of a clear sense of homoeroticism.

YALI: I'm describing a scene from *One More Thing*, a work by dancer and choreographer Adi Boutrous, premiered in Curtain Up Festival in 2020.

There are four men on stage wearing everyday clothes. Two of them are lying on the floor diagonally, with their back to the audience, leaning on their elbows. The other two sit in front of them, looking at them. Silence; there is no music, we're about halfway through the work. A minute later, two dancers are slowly sitting down on the bellies of the lying dancers, carefully laying their entire weight on top of them. A moment of physical contact and tenderness. Now they move backwards across the stage in unison. You can hear their heavy breaths and the dragging of hands and feet. It's hard to carry the weight of another body in this posture. Very slowly, they sit up on the floor, and in close contact, suddenly roll with force and stop at once, leaning against each other; they roll again and stop in another

leaning position; they repeat this several times. As they are moving, they support each other, look at one another, and physically care for each other. Then they stop as one of them lies on top of the other – back to front. There is nothing erotic here, only a physical act of full human attentiveness, and mutual empathy of the senses.

YALI: back to Ran Brown.

RAN BROWN: I think that there is another point that is worth discussion. It may still be too soon to define it as a new phenomenon, but if in the theoretical discourse we hear talk of a new masculinity, perhaps we can see it in the works of a younger artist, Adi Boutrous, where the treatment of this new masculinity is not through embodied representation or non-representation, but it is already present in the body itself. In other words, Adi Boutrous proposes, already in the process of the work-methods he brings to his dancers, certain qualities of tenderness, flow and touch between them, all of which presumably contradict the typical image of the Israeli male.

YALI: Please remind us in which work and when.

RAN BROWN: In his work *It's Always Here*, from 2016 he dances with another male dancer, Avshalom Latucha. They perform a series of actions in complete silence. These can be headstands or other rolls and positions in which they support each other, always maintaining contact and embodied communication, but the new masculinity is located in the manner they do it all. We are used to seeing expressions of masculinity as aggressive, powerful, stable and big, and here we are presented with small, delicate and soft qualities of movement and interaction.

YALI: So, you are saying that he is already at the next stage of this exploration of masculinity?

RAN BROWN: I think he is already in this new masculinity. Unlike other, perhaps older, artists, who were educated towards a different manhood, he has no need to challenge a certain model by placing it onstage, yes, he is simply at the next stage. And I think it allows him to look into the unfulfilled potential that many men still need to explore outside of the dance world, to discover the possibilities of human relationships.

YALI: This really takes me back to early Simone de Beauvoir, with her "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"; and here I see how this happens in an intergenerational reincarnation between male dancers and how the discussion about the essence of masculinity and its transformation becomes present in the body and as part of the situation of the new man you are referring to.

RAN BROWN: There is something else that is perhaps worth mentioning, even if we look at things historically. In 2000, a project titled *Behemot* (beasts) took place at Suzanne Dellal, in which four male choreographers were invited to create a work together – Ido Tadmor, Emanuel Gat, Yossi Yungman and Shlomi Bitton. And the work suits its title, as *Behemot*, in Hebrew -"beasts" – represents the aggressive aspects of masculinity. I think the transition between this work from 2000 to *One More Thing*, by Adi Boutrous 20 years later is a precise reflection of this transformation. If for the older generation the discussion of masculinity, of the possibility of experiencing a different kind of masculinity, was involved with battle and aggression and with the need of showing how society treats and punishes whoever diverges from this model, with the work of Adi Boutrous the definitions had already been broken for him; he is in a new place, where he can explore what masculinity can be now, without fighting the conventions or the limitations imposed by society.

YALI: Thanks Ran, always a pleasure

IRIS: Adi Boutrous continues a dynasty of dance works created by men. We go back to Yair Vardi to discuss his institutional approach towards supporting male dancers and choreographers.

IRIS: You were the director of the Suzanne Dellal Centre for dance for 30 years during which you have founded several significant platforms for Israeli male dancers and choreographers such as...

YAIR VARDI: Only Men Dance. With an emphasis on the "only".

IRIS: It only took place twice.

YAIR VARDI: Unfortunately.

IRIS: Tell us about what motivated you in founding this platform.

YAIR VARDI: we wanted to focus on the Israeli men dancers, we pretended as if nothing happened, as if everything was alright; but it was not always the case; we did not receive the respect or the hug that we expected to, we did not get enough support. We danced, but we were never at the front of the stage. And I thought it was time to focus on men. There were so many young men who danced and danced well, choreographers too, so I went for dancers-choreographers. It was a time that as CEO, I was looking for new, different directions; I kept looking for new ways to provide a suitable stage for Israeli artists.

There were two more projects we created for men only: Javier de Frutos, and *Behemot*, Beasts in Hebrew. All in all, we gave men the stage four times outside of the designated project "Men Dancing", so we did try to put the spotlight on the male sex.

IRIS: Let's go back to Gilad Jerusalmy.

I want to ask you Gilad, about a work we've discussed a lot, *Earth (female)* that you created in 2017, specifically the representations of masculinity in the work. You are two half-naked men on stage, performing a massive masculine work. You are working the land with force

and physicality. There is a very specific male body image throughout the work, unlike in Cowboy, where as a performer you were playing with gender fluidity and its multi-possibilities; Yet in this work, we are looking at a very specific image which is related, I imagine, to the title of the work Earth & female.

Gilad Jerusalmy: Yes, so I think *Earth (female)* was born out of my own preoccupation with my own gender, am I a man? am I a 100% man? and what does it mean to be 100% man?

The inspiration was actually the work of the Israeli pioneer poet Rachel, a woman who immigrated to Israel in the beginning of the 20th century, in 1909, before the state of Israel was formed; those times of pioneers and farmers during what's called the Second Aliyah, the second Jewish emigration to Palestine, were very masculine oriented. It involved the invention of the new Jew, the new Jewish man (the Sabra) through for example, the imitation of the Arab "Fallach" (farmer) working in the fields.

So basically, these Jewish pioneers wanted to invent a new Jewish man, not a new Jewish woman. Women's role, as the Jewish mother, remained intact, but the man needed to reject the diaspora Jew with what was considered his feminine and repulsing characteristics. That perception brought out feminine quality as well as the gentleness and fragility of the pale Jew, who must be rejected. After undergoing a very long process in our creative work, we decided to try to put it to practice in the studio. To treat the studio floor as the earth that we have come to work and to conquer, and make our bodies into the very representation of the ideal new Jewish male, trying to purify it from any remains of femininity, so to speak. Of course that eventually I wanted to show the price, the pain, the hardship and the loss of this process, and perhaps even give an optimistic wink – after all, I'm an optimistic person because in the end, the earth as well as femininity hold elements and qualities we can learn from; if I trace the circular narrative that created the inspiration of the work it begins with Rachel the poet, continues the male image of the Jewish pioneers and looks back at how these men perceived this incredible woman, Rachel. After all she was a ground-breaking

feminist, a glass ceiling breaker, who not only learned to speak and write Hebrew, but used it to create art. This also refers to the gendered discourse about her today in Israeli schools and to the way her story is told. For example, the fact that she was barren that she had tuberculosis; her weakness and her romantic relationships with her lovers; all this gossip with a little bit slut-shaming, instead of dealing with what's important. What a woman! So, this cycle finally brought me back to the lack of feminine presence, which is the important thing. I wanted people to see it; I wanted it to hurt a little and to make people understand by using the title “female”, while what they are seeing in fact are two men in their underwear whamming and slamming.

IRIS: Sweating themselves to death.

Gilad Jerusalmi: Sweating themselves to life!

YALI: In this context, let us talk for a minute about the physical aspects of the work, about the body or the embodiment of the movement. I remember a vertical body bending down hard with great noise as it hits the floor again and again, can you talk a little about this movement design? You also stand facing each other - I remember that horizontal line that you are moving in – can you explain it a little?

Gilad Jerusalmi: So, the movement language we worked with is inspired by the world of agriculture. That is, these grids that we move on from side to side are like ploughing, like the oxen we imagine dragging the wagon behind it, the slamming of body parts are all reflections of planting; by the way, each movement has a name: this is planting, this is the shovel, this is the hoe; it's a bit like using your body as a tool, I mean, the weight of your arm will be the weight of the iron you need to lift and slam. And in general, I can say, and perhaps this is what interests me as a choreographer, because I am interested in the male body at the moment and I mainly work with my own body onstage - so it's important to me that there is something genuine in the movement, that is – weight is weight, and

momentum is momentum, and if you sweat and slip – you sweat and slip, because this is what is happening right now. So, it's this genuine use of the body, in the healthiest and most non-harmful way possible, of course – but yes, it is the body. In the end it's live art, and in this work, you specifically see two men doing this thing.

I can talk on and on about the Second Aliyah, but in the end what you see is two men who really reach their physical limits; at the end of this work I really say to myself "I either experience enlightenment right now or I am going to throw up". It kills me, it's exhausting, and yet it's interesting, it's extremely satisfying; there is a certain satisfaction about connecting to this libido, to this crazy machismo, it's also very stimulating, right? And I must say that only in 2017, only after this work premiered, for the first time in my adult life, I realized I was fully a man; I also realized that I have the performance of a man, that I was constantly busy with this representation of my masculinity. I realized that I kept breaking it with high heel shoes and dresses to challenge myself, because I didn't feel comfortable in this place, but that place existed. And despite all this self-gendered criticism I was able to have a whole experience of saying yes, this is who I am, I accept that. Maybe like we talked before about my privileges in the dance world as a man, I am also privileged in the world outside of dance as a man. I am a Jewish Ashkenazi man, that is, I have a very lovely privilege and it needs to be acknowledged, for better or for worse, you need to know who you are, what your place is, and yes, what you are advocating right now, and who you are advocating beside yourself.

IRIS: I would like to ask you about something else. You upload your performative media work on your own to social networks, spaces that are much freer financially. You don't have to go through mechanisms of government support, stand certain criteria or submit for commissions, right? so My question is: does it emphasize the gender aspects in your work, are you more daring, more radical?

Gilad Jerusalmy: That's interesting. Well... no, I don't think it's radical, but it's more provocative. I think there is something less stylized perhaps, less defined, and it's things that I just wake up in the morning with, I feel like it, I edit it and wham, I put it out there. By the way, if you compare the number of views I get for these videos with how many people will come to see my duet in the theater, it's insane...

IRIS: give us some numbers

GILAD Jerusalmy: A clip I upload in the morning on Facebook or Instagram has 300-400 likes, and when I perform on stage with a nice duet, if 40 people are in the audience, I'm happy; so, if each ""like"" bought a ticket... my life would look different. But I don't complain (they laugh). It does bring out for me perhaps what I am looking for, perhaps this platform allows it to be more provocative and colorful. You want to be attractive and funny; there is a lot of humor in my media works, while my stage work is completely humorless. I killed the humor there; but somehow I feel both of these things strive toward the same point, an honest, simple, intimate moment; perhaps also because gender is something I am very much intrigued by, in many aspects, not just on the personal level, but also politically; we spoke earlier about my experience as a dancer, but I also look at the dance world and see who holds the power positions: the relation between the number of women and men in the dance world in comparison with the amount of men and the number of women in power positions makes no sense. In short, I am very much occupied with these questions. Yet, there is also a certain striving for something intuitive, simple, honest. I spend five minutes working on a video clip and six months on a work for the stage, and you can see the difference, one is funny and carefree, and the other is painful (laughing).

IRIS: Thank you very much, Gilad.

GILAD: It was a pleasure, thank you.

YALI: When we listened to the interviews, we noticed how older dancers support, accompany and promote young dancers and choreographers. Yair Vardi told us about the projects he had founded to promote male dancers, Niv Sheinfeld told us how Nir Ben Gal had invited him to work with him and with Liat Dror in the 90s, when he had just begun dancing, opening the door to the professional dance world; and Gilad Yerushalmi mentioned how Niv Sheinfeld and Oren Laor supported him in his early days as a dancer. We find this intergenerational support fascinating, a testimony for an activist agenda among male Israeli dancers, who, in a masculine-militaristic society, share an imagined, informal and non-consolidated community in order to promote their professional status and develop their possibilities as artists.

Another thing we notice is that, as years go by and perceptions of gender and sexuality change, the Israeli dance scene allows choreographers and dancers more space to examine different questions and issues related to gender in their art, such as gender fluidity, queerness and representations of the masculine body.

IRIS: Clichés and stereotypes are displayed onstage to be challenged and the artists we talked with have something to say to the audience about the male dancing body; they propagate change by setting new models. This process begins somewhere in the 1990s, and we remind you that the first episode of this show, "Breaking the Wall", offered a reading of Ohad Naharin's *Echad Mi Yodea* as a turning point which facilitated dance for boys, because of his use of movements that were outside of the coded dance aesthetics and thanks to the rock-based soundtrack.

Many things have happened since. Many Israeli contemporary choreographers and dancers – some of which are mentioned in this episode – have dug deeper into this wide spectrum of possibilities, echoing and creating a social change that is still taking place.

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You are welcome to visit our website <https://www.hayotmahol.com/home> where you can find more information about the works discussed in this episode.

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Music, by order of appearance:

Downpour, by Kai Engel, 2019

Anthem of the ""Children's' Society"" by Kleinhouse, Accordion: Matan Ashkenasi

Two Room Apartment by Ori Vidislavsky, 1987. Piano: Ori Vidislavsky and Haim Greenspan.

Saxophone: Peter Vertheimer

Moonshine Town, by JR Tundra

""Givat Hatachmoshet"" , lyrics by Yoram Tehar-Lev, music by Yair Rosenblum, playback karaoke by Oren Lev

Pacific Wrens by Chad Crouch, 2021

Excerpt from "Earth (female)" by choreographer Gilad Yerushalmy. Live performance: Gilad Yerushlamy and Tomer Giat, 2017