



REVIEW: Israeli dance troupe captivates audience



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By Roy Berko

When Pam Young, the Executive Director of Dance Cleveland, went to Tel Aviv, Israel, to attend the International Exposure in Dance, she had an ulterior motive. Young was looking for companies for future programs. There were 40 dance troupes from 30 countries present. Young was drawn to Inbal Pinto and Avshalom Pollak Dance Company, an Israeli group. She set her

sights on bringing them to Cleveland. Young not only succeeded in getting them to come, but to open their 2012 United States tour at PlayhouseSquare's Ohio Theatre.

Besides Dance Cleveland's usual corporate sponsors, the logistics of bringing in the troupe was provided by the newly formed Cleveland Israel Arts Connection, Jewish Federation of Cleveland, Mandel Jewish Community Center of Cleveland, and the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage.

An Israeli dance troupe. That translates to Klemzer and cantorial music and Sephardic and Ashkenazi folk dances. Right? Wrong!

The Inbal Pinto and Avshalom Pollak Dance Company blew away the capacity audience with the one-act, hour-long production of OYSTER, an ingenious creation which gives the illusion of a circus-world of wandering street people whose intimate artistic vision speaks of truths.

The full-length work is filled with dreamlike qualities which reminds the viewer of the works of Fellini and Tim Burton. It is set to the music of Piazzola, Leoncavallo, Harry James, Yma Sumac and the Tuvan throat singers. The latter is a variant of overtone singing practiced by the Tuva people of southern Siberia. The effect is mesmerizing and lends itself to an almost mystic-like involvement.

The troupe has 13 dancers who range in age from very young to 75 years of age, and are of diverse nationalities and backgrounds.

OYSTER is a series of scenes which are done with amazing fluidity. The movements require great physical control. It is both dramatic and comedic. According to the choreographers, the presentation is constantly being updated through rehearsal, performance, polishing and cast changes.

It's almost impossible to give a blow-by-blow description of OYSTER as it contains ballet, modern dance, gymnastics, mime, acrobatics, flying figures, illusion, dramatic lighting effects, shadow movements and the unexpected — all blending into a fascinating whole.

The printed program contained a column entitled "Dance Matters" by former Plain Dealer dance critic Wilma Salisbury. It was an interesting discussion, not only of Pinto/Pollack, but of why dance is important.

Capsule judgment: It's too bad that the Inbal Pinto and Avshalom Pollak Dance Company was only at the Allen for two performances. The positive word of mouth would have sold out many, many concerts. Let's hope that Dance Cleveland brings the company back... sooner, rather than later.