
Dance Preview: Men Making Moves

Two guy-only shows heat up the local dance scene

BY **GLENN SUMI**

TWO ROOM APARTMENT choreographed and performed by Niv Sheinfeld and Oren Laor, Thursday and Saturday (February 26 and 28) at 8 pm, Sunday (March 1) at 3 pm, Dancemakers (9 Trinity, Studio 303). \$20-\$25. dancemakers.org.

CE N'EST PAS LA FIN DU MONDE choreography by Sylvain Émard, Saturday (February 28) at 8 pm, Fleck Dance Theatre (207 Queens Quay West). \$19-\$37. 416-973-4000, danceworks.ca

It might be chilly out, but lots of testosterone will be heating up the city's dance theatres this weekend. Two shows by acclaimed choreographers feature all-male casts.

First up is Two Room Apartment, which is being put on by Dancemakers as part of the multidisciplinary Spotlight on Israeli Culture series. The duet was originally choreographed and performed by a woman and man, Liat Dror and Nir Ben Gal, back in 1987.

Now the influential work - one of the cornerstones of contemporary Israeli dance - has been reconceived by two men, Niv Sheinfeld and Oren Laor, who are partners on and off the stage.

"Niv had seen the entire work, and he spent some of his early career with Dror and Ben Gal's company, but I'd only seen an excerpt of about five to seven minutes, performed by the two when they were much older," says Laor, on the phone from his Tel Aviv home.



Thankfully, a video of the work existed, and the two studied it. How to make it their own?

"At first we recreated all the movements they did and kept the same score," says Laor. "Then we began changing things. They're a man and a woman. Two men behave very differently, although you'd be surprised how often people ask who's the 'man' and who's the 'woman' in a same-sex relationship."

Before doing much work on the duet, however, they went out to Dror and Ben Gal's home in the Israeli desert to ask for permission. The couple agreed, and papers were drawn up to make it legal.

"We didn't want to put in all this effort and then not be able to perform it," says Laor, laughing.

One of the most striking images comes when Laor, stripped down to his birthday suit, leaps off the floor and claps onto his partner with his arms and legs.

"In the original, the woman seduces and teases the man, who's at first not interested," says Laor. "When they created the piece, they were much younger, in their 20s. We're in our 40s and men. Life is much different. It didn't feel right. We felt this was strong."

Audiences and critics agree. In 2013, the Israeli Dance Critics' Circle acknowledged the piece with an award for best performance.

A choreographer who's no stranger to international acclaim is Sylvain Émard, whose shows here, including *Te Souvient-Il?* and *Fragments - Volume 1*, are dance must-sees.

Now as part of the DanceWorks season he's bringing *Ce n'est pas la fin du monde* (It's Not The End Of The World), a work for seven male dancers.

"I wanted to create something about urgency," says Émard from Montreal. He'd also wanted to do something with an all-male cast, especially after enjoying a duet he created as part of *Fragments - Volume 1*.

"Then I realized that the all-male cast could fit with this idea about urgency," he says.



The title, he says, is optimistic, despite things like climate change and political unrest throughout the world.

Rehearsing without women brought him back to childhood, perhaps mimicking the segregated arena of the schoolyard. And having seven dancers allows him to group them in varied configurations.

Still, seven is nothing compared to the number of performers Émard employs in the massive Le Grand Continental, which combines line dancing with a modern sensibility. What started out as a work for some 60 dancers at Montreal's Festival TransAmériques has mushroomed into jumbo-size performances, some involving more than 200 amateur dancers.

"I've always been obsessed with line dancing, and I would often put a bit of it into my pieces," says Émard.

What he didn't know was that the piece would become an international phenomenon. He presented a version in Mexico, several in North American cities and the day after we speak, he's off to South Korea.

"It's become this amazing thing where I get to travel around the world and meet people from the local dance scenes," he says. "There are weeks of rehearsals, so I get to know the culture, hang out and learn about the dance climate."

Source: <https://nowtoronto.com/stage/dance/dance-preview--men-making-moves/>

Vocabulary

movements (noun)

gestures or actions

score (noun)

the music played during a performance

drawn up (verb)

to create a written version

striking (adj)

to be something that makes an impression

acknowledged (adj)

to be recognized; to be awarded

unrest (noun)

violence, disorder

mimicking (verb)

to recreate a similar atmosphere

mushroomed (verb)

to grow rapidly, out of control

scene (adj)

a community, like the dance scene

Questions

Question 1

Who was the dance piece Two Room Apartment originally created for?

Question 2

What two things did Laor and Sheinfeld do after watching a video of the piece?

Question 3

Did the original performers of Two Room Apartment give their permission to make the changes in the current performance? – How do you know? Explain.

Question 4

Why did the choreographer of the dance Ce n'est pas la fin du monde use an all-male cast?

Question 5

What prize from the Israeli Dance Critics' Circle was won by the duet Two Room Apartment, in 2013?

Question 6

What did seven dancers permit Émard to do in his piece Ce n'est pas la fin du monde?

Question 7

How many dancers are in a performance of Le Grand Continental?

Question 8

Name 3 places where Le Grand Continental has been presented.



Answers

Answer 1

The piece was created for a woman and a man.

Answer 2

1. recreated the movements
2. kept the same score

Answer 3

Yes; papers were drawn up to make the changes legal.

Answer 4

Sylvain Émard wanted to create a work about urgency.

Answer 5

The prize was for Best Performance.

Answer 6

It permitted him to group them in varied configurations.

Answer 7

The number of performers varies and can go from 60 dancers to 200.

Answer 8

1. Mexico
2. several North American cities
3. South Korea