

The elderly women for pilot-hood

A review of his Dana Shalev in Erev - Rav internet magazine, on the GO show. The review was published on 27/5/18

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"Much of the power in the image of "old women pilots" lies in the fact that the Israeli society is militaristic and macho, and being a pilot, even a former one, is considered a symbol of status, which means being part of the elite. Liss's choice to place the women in this position is no less than a subversive act." Dana Shalev in her review of Galit Liss's work – GO!

The artistic work "Go" by choreographer Galit Liss opens with a short scene that tells in a few minutes the entire lives of a forgotten generation: the first women of the state, or, more precisely, those who were children during the establishment of the state. It is possible that some of them were not born here or did not grow up here at all, but now they team up to this hidden Israeli group, which Liss refers to as "legal immigrants" and brings them back to the front of the stage, literally.

The piece opens to the sounds of an IDF march, with about 20 women sitting on the floor in alternating poses and shaking their hips with delicate, rhythmic movements: they are 70-80 years old, and perform the sexual movement with measured precision. These are the mothers of our soldiers. The girls of the World War, beautiful and tall, and their furrowed faces bear the private and national histories of all of us. "The impressive opening image resonates throughout the piece and I believe it is the key to viewing it."

Liss works with women aged 50-80 during the "Gila Workshop", and judging by the quality of the show, this is not a workshop of the kind that is common in community centers, but an exclusive workshop where serious work is done with the body. That is most likely the reason why it caught the interest of women who are former professional actresses or dancers, alongside careerist women from other fields of interest.

Liss's choice to open the work with a provocative image of women with legs spread apart, who move the pelvis back and forth, while the woman in the first row is wearing a skirt that exposes the legs and underpants, makes it almost redundant to discuss stereotypes of body images among older women because it crosses beyond them. The movement of the women is gentle and elegant compared to the screeching IDF march and the hint of nudity and sexuality, while respecting their physical abilities by creating movements that flatter their bodies. It is clear that this performance seeks to present these women as characters full of life and passion, rich in life experiences, and Liss does not fall once in to the trap of images that may turn the situation ridiculous. The dance she created highlights the delicacy, fragility and power that can be found in the body at any age, if you know how to use it properly.

In the second scene, the women wear flight overalls and convert from mothers of soldiers to the soldiers themselves. I see this image as an act of extracting and discovering internal forces that are hidden from the eye, but in order to remove the feminine power from its hiding place and to present it, it is necessary to use masculine images; Much of the power in the image of "old women pilots" lies in the fact that the Israeli society is militaristic and macho, and being a pilot, even a former one, is considered a symbol of status, which means being part of the elite. Liss's choice to place the women in this position is no less than a subversive act.

Later in the work, the women take off their overalls. The work is signed in a piano version of the IDF march, which turns the sounds of war into an invitation to dance, so that Liss's women do not only take control of the men's grip on the sword, they also disarm the war. Here the message is clear and utopian.

During the show some of the women tell short anecdotes from their own personal history. Wisely enough, Liss chose not to allow all the women to speak, avoiding, yet again, the atmosphere of a community center. Most of the anecdotes that were told were about dancing.

"When I was a little girl, I danced to classical music in the living room, but only in recent years did I dare to dance on stage," My paraphrase to what one of them told me. Liss celebrates with her the boldness of someone who has "seen everything and gone through everything" and now "does not care what they say."

The war is mentioned only once: One of the women says that she was orphaned at the age of five, and all she has left of her father is a dance that he taught her. This delicate reference is enough, in the traumatized country we live in, to reverberate the Second World War, with all the range of emotions and ideologies it carries for us.

The dance connects private stories to war images (as mentioned before, throughout most of the work the women are wearing flight overalls), which connect the viewer to the Jewish-Israeli history. If there had not been such a clear use of the IDF march, it could have been any war or "The Mother of all Wars."

Liss uses Contact, a dance practice suitable for the "golden age", to place the women in situations of dependence / attachment / suspense that sometimes appear as still images from the war, of soldiers who have been frozen in a moment of struggle, rescue or attack.

In this way, Liss places the women as central to the historical story, while referencing the art that documents war, such as paintings or photography, for example, focusing mainly on press photographs, those who "seize the moment" and become a symbol. This way, she also places the women in "contemporary" and "popular."

Is it necessary to have male imageries in order to reposition these women? I am trying to imagine the performance without the flight overalls, and it seems to me that the women would have been left as dancing elderly women who tell stories.

In one of the most beautiful moments of the piece, one of the women stands alone at the center of the stage (the woman wearing a skirt in the opening sequence) and calls "Go" in a growing call until it becomes a long cry. At this moment it seems that she is freed from the burden of the discussion and wants to simply be a woman present at the center. For me, this is one of the main things that this work allows.