

Rina Schenfeld and her Dance

by Luuk Utrecht*

Rina Schenfeld is one of the foremost dance artists in Israel. She first established her reputation in the sixties, as a principal dancer of the Batsheva Dance Company, where she was engaged from its foundation in 1963 until 1977. In that period she manifested herself as an extraordinarily expressive and versatile dancer, who is as accomplished in classical ballet as in modern dance. Her dance performances also hold up to international standards of excellence. This applies, moreover, to her own choreography since 1978, when she presented her first piece, 'Threads'.

From an historical point of view, in her choreography Rina Schenfeld follows a development that may be traced back to the Bauhaus experiments in the twenties by Oskar Schlemmer.

Rina Schenfeld uses objects as costumes and as body parts, or she herself becomes part of an object. But her choreography does not demonstrate any of the coldly analytical or even machine-like qualities of the Bauhaus approach. Probably influenced by American expressionism - with which she is well acquainted, thanks to the former Martha Graham orientation of the Batsheva Dance Company - emotion and feeling are just as characteristic of Schenfeld's pieces as the constructive character of her play with form, space and time.

Schenfeld's dance themes are varied, from classical arabesques to frog jumps, while her movements in general are often influenced by the art of mime. Always, however, her movements are imbued with feelings and emotions that are colored by her personal radiance. The tenseness of her performances, in which mental concentration and energy are made visible in movement, is a constant source of fascination for the observer. Rina Schenfeld, moreover, demonstrates - in spite of the clever and experimental nature of her pieces - a vitality and joy of dance, which also catch the spectator.

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