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Reviews  
[Back](#)

## *The Queen of Grace and Aesthetics-Rina Schenfeld*

The organisers must have saved the best for the last. The week-long The Other Festival in Chennai concluded with a solo performance by Rina Schenfeld from Israel, otherwise referred to as the 'First Lady of Israeli Dance.' Regal in her bearing and as graceful as the swan she was mimicking, she gave a new meaning to **sophistication**. There is a strong influence of ballet in her movements that were light footed and precise. Agile and in control, Schenfeld exhibited an outstanding sense of balance. The music she used was classical western, with compositions from Faure, Brahms, Arvo Part and Beethoven. She has an ageless quality about her that belies her forty-year career in dance, and her toned body bespeaks of a lifetime of discipline and dedication.



Attired in black and white, Schenfeld kept the audience spellbound for almost an hour. There was no introduction to her presentations, no interactive session at the end of it, no need really for either. The compere, Ranvir Shah put it succinctly, "There is no need for any words after this wonderful show." Her use of props, as the two sticks in 'Swards,' a chair in 'Black Swan,' the train of the bridal costume in 'Woman in White,' and the chin mask in 'Pink Swan' did not detract, rather they complemented her dance unobtrusively. Her choreography was closely entwined with these props such that one looked like an extension of the other.

The dance presentations were not narrative in context, but Schenfeld's body language and movements were eloquent. The drama on stage aided by the dancer's electric presence and her mobile face only complemented the oftentimes slow and deliberate movements. Her carriage and body alignment was remarkable, and she was a picture of confidence. Schenfeld created beautiful images of birds flying, of an entrapped and terrified bride in a church, ... the caricature of the black swan with the mask that seemed to threaten, confine, and scare her... But should one spend time figuring out the meaning behind every move, when the dazzling geometry of her movements were quite enough?

The lighting design and execution was brilliant. This auburn-haired dancer with the most poetic limbs and dainty gait got an incredible ovation. This was however not surprising.