

Don't Miss Batsheva!

The Batsheva Dance Company of Israel is appearing at the City Center Theatre on 55th Street through December 20th. There are no finer 16 dancers anywhere in the world, and certainly no ensemble was ever more gorgeous woman for woman and man for man.

The company founded by Bethsabée de Rothschild, with Martha Graham as artistic advisor and Norman Walker as artistic director, is appearing in America through the sponsorship of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, with the assistance of the Helena Rubenstein Foundation.

There can be no question that the Batsheva Dance Company is a splendid hit from the start. If one emphasizes the beauty of the dancers it is simply because there is a physicality and sensuousness about these vibrant young performers simply unmatched in our experience.

When the choreography is uninteresting, or even down-right terrible as in the case of two works by Moshe Efrati, the dancers are still so stunning to gaze upon that critical reservations tend to disappear in the face of girls so lithe and lovely and men so muscular and handsome. At the very least, Batsheva is a wonderful sight, and at its best it ranks with the outstanding modern dance companies headed by Martha Graham, Paul Taylor and Alvin Ailey.

For years we have urged the seemingly lost cause of modern troupes made up of the finest dancers performing only the best works of many choreographers. Batsheva, once it disciplines itself in the selection of works by younger creators, seems headed in the right direction.

It is hardly surprising to find that the strongest works are the creations of Miss Graham, Norman Walker and Jose Limon. "Percussion Concerto by Norman Norrice was not without merit, but both of the Efrati works, "Sin Lieth at the Door" and "Ein-Dor," were little better than male burlesque straight off of 42nd Street.

Efrati is, fortunately, a magnificent dancer, and the company boasted a strong male ensemble including Enud Ben-David, Rahamim Ron and Bruce Becker.

The ladies are absolutely glorious. In the works seen in the first two of three different programs to be offered. Rina Schenfeld stood out as a star of special magnitude, with Rena Gluck and Nurit Stern not far behind.

Since Martha Graham has been associated closely with the company, it seems natural that Batsheva is the only organization other than the great lady's own permitted to perform her very special works. On the basis of "Errand into the Maze" and "Diversion of Angels," the Graham repertory is magnificently represented by two outstanding works danced superlatively well.

"In Errand into the Maze" Rina Schen-



NURIT STERN and RAHAMIM RON
Batsheva Lead Dancers

feld performed the central role better than anyone within my experience. Her sinuous body control is matched with an acute musical awareness and character revelation. She is certainly one of the supreme Graham dancers.

"Diversion of Angels" has replaced Miss Graham's "Cave of the Heart," and while the drama of the latter will be missed, the more lyrical work is one of the choreographer's most poetic and delightful inspirations. "Diversion" was a joyous romp, a welcome burst of spring.

Walker's "Baroque Concerto No. 3," in parts of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," is virtually an Arpino classic exercise in bare feet. It is a beautiful and graceful work, and was danced with exquisite delicacy and bravura.

Glen Tetley's "The Mythical Hunters" seemed to come into sharper focus than when danced in the past by his own performers, and Limon's "The Exiles" was a welcome revival.

Simon Sadoff's orchestra is first rate. The Batsheva Dance Company should not be missed.