

Batsheva Dancers Newark News In Final Program

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Evening News Dance Critic

NEW YORK—Novelists and dramatists, it is said, are best when they write about what they know.

If this holds for choreographers as well, then Rina Schenfeld's "Curtains" is a poignantly personal statement about a woman in conflict between a career as a performer and a career at home.

The work was premiered at the City Center last night at the opening of the third and final program of the Batsheva Dance Company of Israel.

Miss Schenfeld, whom I deem to be one of the world's great dancers, is among a very few artists in her native land who are attempting to create a foundation of choreography upon which Israeli companies can build indigenous repertoires. Moshe Efrati, two of whose works have been given during the current engagement, and Rena Gluck, both of Batsheva, are others.

"Curtains" has going for it an intriguing, circusy set piece by Danny Karavan, good costumes by Linda Hodas, imaginative lighting by Haim Tchelet and another apt score by Noam Sheriff, to say nothing of Schenfeld in the principal role, Tselila Goldstein as Schenfeld's other self and Rahamim Ron as the

Ringmaster who would woo her back to the arena.

The dance pays tribute to Martha Graham, Agnes deMille and dear old Broadway and concludes predictably with the protagonist won back to the lights, but stifled in the midst of her desire and, perhaps, symbolically spread-eagled against the set in a montage of martyrdom.

The program included "Moves," Jerome Robbins' ode to silence, performed by several companies but most notably by the City Center Joffrey Ballet, a work that requires harmony and a degree of ESP essayed by many, but achieved by few.

To say only that Batsheva does it well is to say that it does not do it so well as it might. The insouciance, the sense of humor, are missing here. The company never quite breaks away from the purpose and mission that inform its serious works. "Rehearsal . . . (?)" is another of its lighter things similarly and mysteriously affected.

The evening would not have been complete without representation from Martha Graham, for whom Batsheva has an infinite affinity. The Best Seller of all time (the Bible, didn't you know?) could scarcely have told "Embattled Garden" better. Nurit Stern was a melting Eve, and Efrati, a properly angered Adam. Ehud Ben-David was the Invidious Stranger, as Schenfeld's Lilith calmly fanned herself under a tree on the outskirts of Eden.

It had all happened before; it would happen again. Lilith knows, and so does the Stranger, he who plucked the apple. The dancing and characterizations were marvelous. What hallmarks for any company to have!