

GALLERY



Eran Shanny and Yasmeen Godder in "Love Fire." A performance that presents the cliched love triangle with surprising depth.

Ring of fire

Dance meets art installation in 'Love Fire' – the first collaboration between choreographer Yasmeen Godder and artist Yochai Matos

By Roni Dori

Five years after first meeting at Puh restaurant in Jaffa – when he was a waiter and she a diner – they sit at a quiet table in the same eatery, gazing tenderly at each other. Occasionally one or both of them will laugh, as if amused by a long-running private joke. Artist Yochai Matos and choreographer Yasmeen Godder seem to exist in total harmony. The result of their artistic collaboration is "Love Fire" – a coproduction of the Theatre de la Place in Liege, Belgium and the Hebbel am Ufer Theater in Berlin. The work, which is as much an installation as it is a dance performance, will have its Israeli premiere at the Curtain Up Festival on November 27.

Matos and Godder have flirted with each others' work for several years now, as Matos describes it, until Godder launched a short-term project of "artistic experiments" and suggested that they work on it together. In the end, she was not able to obtain funding for the project, "but a channel for dialogue was opened with no connection to a specific objective and that was nice," says Godder. "There was no 'you do this and I'll do that,' only communication. It even sounds a little romantic in the context of the work, to talk about art. This doesn't happen often, and it's very special for me."

"Love Fire," which in its first incarnation was called "Eran Solo" and was performed entirely to the music of classical waltzes, is performed by a man (Eran Shanny), a woman (Godder) and another man (Matos himself, in a brief appearance). Godder – who some have referred to as the Israeli Pina Bausch – presents the cliched love triangle with depth and in a surprising way, both as a choreographer and as a performer. The accessories used in the performance, from microphone to high-heeled shoes, from sequins to fluorescent bodies, come together to form an amazing installation, which combines Godder's chaos – including splashes of colorful jelly – and Matos' visual images into an artistic display that remains etched in my brain.

Hearts on the city hall steps

Yochai Matos, born in 1977, is a graduate of the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design's visual communications department. His works have been featured in respected galleries, but presumably most Tel Avivians are familiar with his work in urban spaces: he placed red heart-shaped ceramic tiles on the steps leading up to city hall ("I Love City Hall"); he placed assorted images such as a telephone, toaster and banana behind neon street signs ("Street Signs"). His works have recently been displayed as part of the group exhibition "Inferno" at the Watermill Center in New York.

Yasmeen Godder, born in 1973, moved with her family to New York at the age of 11 and studied at the High School of Performing Arts, better known as the high school from the movie "Fame" (Godder: "I grew up mesmerized by the movie, and then it came true"; Matos: "If you need some kind of explanation as to why we work together, then as I far as I'm concerned that's it"). She earned a B.A. in dance from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and has worked as an independent choreographer since 1997.

Godder moved back to Israel in 1999, following her partner and dramaturge

Itzik Giuli, where she was warmly embraced by the dance world. She has been awarded numerous prizes, including the Hasia Levy Agron Choreography Prize (twice), the Mifal Hapayis national lottery Landau Prize for the performing arts, and the prestigious Bessie Award in 2002 for "I Feel Funny Today." Reviews of her work have also been very favorable: "The choreography, the dramaturgy, the internal rhythm of the work – everything is done with wonderful talent," wrote Haaretz's dance critic Ruth Eshel of "I'm Mean, I Am." "A powerful experience, magnificently done," wrote Gabi Eldor in Ha'ir, of "Two Playful Pink."

Half confident, half scared

The opening scene of "Love Fire," which takes Godder's careful language of movement to new heights, features dancer Eran Shanny – a creative collaborator on the work – half chasing,

and in my art, I use my body a lot. The movement exists inherently in the art. You tell me that I am dancing; I can tell you that Yasmeen is a visual artist to the same extent. My career as a dancer is not my objective in the end. I appreciate physical effort very much, and part of my dream is that my livelihood will be connected to my body." He sees a common denominator between him and Godder, he adds: "Yasmeen is a strange bird in the world of Israeli dance, and I'm also like that within the plastic arts. The collaboration enabled each of us to [stay true to ourselves]."

Godder: "This collaboration opened a kind of window for one to look at the process of the other and to see how each of us develops a concept. We saw that we both sometimes work in a similar manner without knowing in advance what direction we're heading toward. On the surface, in the plastic arts, the concepts exist before the performance, but it was interesting for me to discover



Godder, left, and Matos. We are both "strange birds" in our fields of work, he says.

Godder: 'I have to feel as if there is some slight danger, that the dancer or performer is struggling with something, feeling life.'

half being chased, half chuckling, half ridiculous, half confident, half scared. "This piece involves walking the very fine line between something very grand and impressive and something extremely violent," Godder said at the beginning of the year, when she showed one segment at the A-Genre Festival at the Tmuna Theater. "It's almost like looking at a certain object from the front... the same thing that looks amazing from the front may look miserable, pathetic and even desperate from the other side."

Godder and Matos embarked on a process of reaction and mutual productivity. "What intrigued me," she says, "is the way in which Yochai will respond immediately and instinctively to the work." Matos, who appears in a brief segment of the piece, felt comfortable on stage and regards the whole thing almost dismissively. "In my work

through Yochai to what extent embarking on the road for him is not predetermined. There is room for change... This concept is of interest to me in my work as well and it makes very happy when I am asked how much improvisation there is in the work – even though in most of them there is hardly any – because that means it is happening now, and one of the most important things to me is that the performances feel as if they are happening now.

"I have to feel as if there is some slight danger, that the dancer or performer is struggling with something, feeling life," she continues. "That is something that is very complicated to create, because part of the approach to being a dancer is that he has skill and confidence."

Will they collaborate in the future? "God is great," Matos says with a smile. "Love Fire" is scheduled to make its European premiere in Belgium in February 2010. Apart from that, the plan is to show it at a contemporary art gallery or a museum. "These are precisely the places where I found myself in Yasmeen's [work]," says Matos. "The thought of Yasmeen presenting in a performance space – this is the exact kind of place where we cannot create without each other."

A shutter onto the world

Kulla, the industrial design studio of three Shenkar College graduates, is earning high praise from Italy and Japan thanks to its innovative methods and materials

By Yuval Saar

When Miri Breskin, Adi Shpigel and Keren Tomer were studying industrial design at the Shenkar College of Engineering and Design they began keeping tabs on apartments that were being renovated, so that they could use the construction waste in their class assignments. What bothered them most of all was the question of where all the white plastic jalousie blinds – trisim – one of the most notorious components of apartment balconies in Greater Tel Aviv, disappeared to.

"We started tracing the path of discarded construction material," relates Tomer. "We discovered that the renovators weren't willing to give us the shutters and would only sell them to us, because they sell the aluminum frames. From the renovators we moved on to scrap metal shops, where we saw how they mishandled the poor plastic shutters, kicked them and broke them. We asked one of the scrap-shop owners for the shutters and because he had to pay for waste removal, he agreed to let us take as much as we wanted. We came, loaded up, and that's how we found new raw material to work with."

Ever since, Shpigel explains, she, Breskin and Tomer have lived in the studio amid piles of the plastic shutters, which are sorted, painted and cut on the way to their transformation into finished products. The three have used the blinds to create a surprising and original line of furniture that so far includes a stool, a chair and a CD rack whose precise, minimalist esthetic contradicts the standard perception of their main component.

Even though the main raw material is considered very Israeli, Tomer says the studio, located in Moshav Beit Yitzhak, has received favorable responses from Japan, Italy and France. It turns out that the same plastic blinds are used in these countries. In Israel, she says, the initial reaction to the chair is wonder and questions like "Can you actually sit on that?" and "I recognize this, my grandmother had one like it."

The use of local materials is also reflected in the name of the studio. "It's 'kulla' (merely, in Hebrew slang) industrial design," explains Tomer with a smile. "In the end, they realize that it's the simplest thing, the smallest thing, that doesn't have to take itself too seriously." Shpigel adds: "There is sometimes a sense in the design world that everything is terribly serious, terribly lofty. In the end, it's design for people, simple, at eye level, everyday."

Breskin says the idea of opening a studio together came up while they were still students, when they discovered they had similar areas of interest. After Tomer and Shpigel worked for other studios, they decided to realize their shared dream. Breskin joined later: "We have more or less the same approach, the same taste in design. At first we built a portfolio with works from the time when all three of us were students, and we noticed that when someone who didn't know us looked at the portfolio they often thought that one person had done the whole thing."

Beyond the shared areas of interest, however, the main reason for opening a studio together was the desire to realize their dreams and not those of others. Shpigel: "In industrial design in Israel there aren't many interesting work options for young designers, who usually make blueprints, do technical work on a com-

puter, things that appealed to us less. When you work for someone else you are realizing someone else's dreams, and that starts to frustrate you at some point. We wanted to create a framework that would enable us to do things that interest us, our things, from start to finish. We don't always know what the next project will be or where the money will come from. We say that we'll work with what is of interest to us and then it will work out from there."

Tomer: "This is also why what it was important to us to open the studio as close as possible to the time of our graduation, in order to maintain the spirit of creativity, innovation and daring."

Shpigel says, "It was important for us to maintain the framework studies. It's very fruitful, you're not in a vacuum. It's something that typifies our class a whole. To this day, when we have an idea or a sketch we send them first to our classmates and ask what they think. That of course doesn't mean we don't have any outside customers. That's where the money comes from."

As an example of an external project they refer to a project to build a sculpture garden in the Bird Mosaic forest in Caesarea, for the Caesarea Development Company. It brought 12 volunteer artists from the community together with 12 groups of golfers, kindergartens, schoolchildren and others who designed benches made from discarded materials from the Caesarea industrial park. "We went to all the factories to see what there was, what you could work with, what would be durable, what



From left: Adi Shpigel, Keren Tomer and Miri Breskin at Kulla.

wasn't toxic, what is suitable for children to work with and so on," Tomer says. "Each group prepared a few sketches and we translated them into professional plans. We tried to limit them as little as possible. It took nine months

and the whole process was very exciting.

"In general, this is a good example for understanding what interests us, it's more the materials and the work methods, and not necessarily the end product. So far it has not yet happened that someone came and said 'I want to make a ring or a new desk.' Each project has a supervisor, who coordinates, ties loose ends, worries about arrangements and manages the whole project," Tomer explains.

Doesn't a studio consisting of only three women generate tensions?

Shpigel: "On the contrary. Girl power, no? Basically, each one brings something a little different, and individual abilities. Miri and I are stronger in the details, the tuning, and compositions. Keren is stronger in the technical aspects, computers and anything related to carpentry and measurements. When she was abroad and we had to saw something, it just didn't come out the same."

25
שנים לאופרת ישראל
Anniversary
of the Israeli Opera

in cooperation with
B E T A C H A
Foundation

THE ISRAELI
OPERA
TEL-AVIV-YAFO

World Premiere
January 2010

Based on the poetic play by Hanoch Levin

The opera
The Child Dreams
Hanoch Levin | Gil Shohat

Mon	Wed	Fri	Sat	Mon
18.1	20.1	22.1	23.1	25.1
20:00	20:00	13:00	20:00	20:00
Premiere Performance				

מפעילי תיאטרון ישראלי

מפעילי תיאטרון ישראלי

marc rich foundation

for education, culture and welfare

The Israeli Opera - Tel Aviv Performing Arts Center
03-6927777 | www.israel-opera.co.il