

15.06x22.45	31	9 עמוד	HAARETZ - FRONT	08.07.2010	23326686-6
נעה דר נועה דר כוריאוגרפית - 25160					

# The other side of us

*In her latest work, choreographer Noa Dar examines nationalist ideas and deconstructs the collective Israeli identity*

By Elad Samorzik

In the pastoral yard of her Tel Aviv home on a recent summer evening, Noa Dar speaks softly and with precision about her life and the path she has taken in the world of dance. Her son Hillel, 8, runs around the yard blowing a piercing whistle incessantly. He makes occasional sallies toward us, curious about the unfamiliar visitor. Dar meets with me after a long day of rehearsing "Anu Banu," which will be performed tomorrow as part of the Maholohet: SummerDance 2010 festival at Tel Aviv's Suzanne Dellal Center. "Anu" ("Us"), the first part of the work, premiered at Curtain Up International Exposure, in December. The second part, "Banu" ("We Came") will be presented for the first time tomorrow night, as a work in progress.

"I felt that in order to allow 'Banu' to fall into the right place I had to expose it to the public and to bring it to the stage already, even though it hasn't been finalized yet. And perhaps even to leave it that way, frayed," she explains.

The name of the dance diptych directs the audience precisely to the place Dar wants to touch, at national myths related to Israeli history and reality. These have been with her since childhood, on Kibbutz Deganya Alef in the 1970s: "The issue of Zionist ideology was very prominent on the kibbutz. This was also the period of the War of Attrition and the Yom Kippur War. Soldiers from the kibbutz fell in the wars, and there was the whole issue of glorifying self-sacrifice for society and for the Zionist idea. Even as a child I had a hard time with that. That dissonance is a wound that existed even then and that has stayed with me."

## Like a laboratory

It was while she was on the kibbutz that she fell in love with dance. At the age of nine she abandoned gymnastics ("the high beam really scared me") and began learning dance with Hedda Oren and Oshra Elkayam. In 11th grade she left the kibbutz and enrolled in the high school of the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. At 18 she was accepted to the Batsheva 2 Dance Company (which later became the Batsheva Ensemble). After two years with Batsheva Dar was awarded a scholarship from the Merce Cunningham Studio and moved to New York. During her two-year stay, she worked with choreographers Zvi Gotheiner and Jeanette Stoner, who had a great influence on her, among others.

After returning to Israel she joined the Tamar Dance Company, a collective of dancer-choreographers, and began to choreograph for the first time. "After two years with the company I decided to go to Paris, where I continued to create, I gathered dancers around me and created works that I performed at festivals. After two years in Paris my partner missed Israel and decided to return. A month later I returned too."



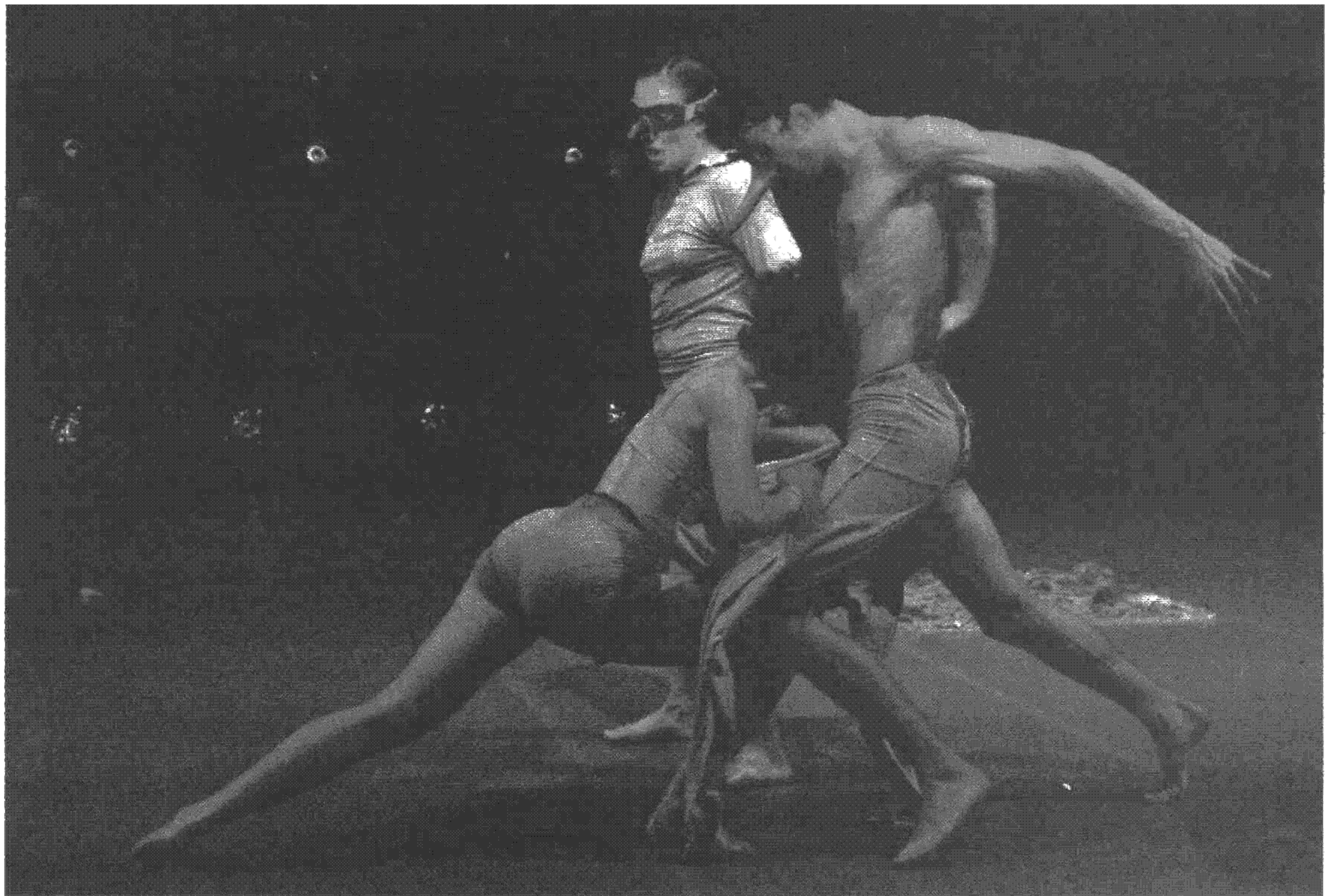
Daniel Tchetchik

**Noa Dar. Creating empathy for those who are different.**

She formed the Noa Dar Dance Group in 1993. The company has performed its repertory of 25 works at a variety of festivals and dance events in Israel and abroad and has been garnered many awards. At first the group was based in Holon, where it received support from the city, but in the interest of full artistic freedom Dar decided to strike out, and created a private studio on Tel Aviv's Carlebach Street.

"Tetris" (2006), created in collaboration with visual artist Nati Shamia-Opher, earned Dar recognition even outside the dance world. Viewers watched the performance by poking their heads through holes in the purpose-built "ceiling" above them, which was in effect the performance, so that the dancers moved around and in between the heads of the audience members. Other prominent works created by Dar in recent years are "In a Black Black Land" (2003), "Clouds and Soup" (2005) and "Arnica" (2007).

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Arale Golran

Noa Dar's "Anu." The aim is to show things in a nonbelligerent way in order to create distance.

Dar explains that in "Us," the first work on the tomorrow's program, she seeks to examine, separate and categorize the collection of materials that comprise the collective identity: She sought, she says, "first of all to isolate, to create a catalog, to go into detail. I wanted to sterilize everything in order to examine these materials as in a sterile laboratory. The aim is to show the things in a nonbelligerent, very cool way, in order to create distance and to look at everything more objectively."

### 'Neutralizing the blood and sweat'

One of the concrete images in "Us" is of soldiers. "There's a part that depicts soldiers who are moving in the area, walking on a very narrow street and breaking into a house. The objective was to change that, to neutralize the dust, the blood and the sweat completely and to create a type of wax statue of this situation, to present it as in a museum," she says.

The second part, "We Came," is more abstract. Dar says it represents a kind of reconstruction of the first part into a utopia composed of a variety of independent individuals with empathy for those who are different, "other".

"After 'Us' was performed I suddenly saw that I had created a very compulsive work. You see it and are left without air. And I wanted to create the mirror image, the other side. So I decided to take exactly the same materials and to make something entirely different out of them, to turn this rigid and bitter place into a place where there is air and openness, a place where the individual is the center, the one who leads... A place where being different is what takes this society to a good place. Being different in this case does

not cause disintegration but creates something that enhances and strengthens."

*What made you return to that wound from your childhood and deal with subjects related to the national ethos?*

"It comes back to me through my children. I think that after years of relative openness in this country, the 1980s and '90s, we are now secluding ourselves once again. Since the assassination of [Yitzhak] Rabin, and especially since the last election, we're becoming insensitive to the outside world as well as to the suffering of the other, the needs of the other, the narrative of the other. And I experience that through my children, who are once again receiving the doctrines that I received in the 1970s, but this time in a far more cynical manner.

"The world around us – and we too, with our experience as a state – already knows that it's not our right alone to be here, that there's another nation here with needs, that it is suffering and that a large part of its suffering is our responsibility. What they're in effect doing to the children, even more intensively than they did to us, is education for chauvinism without any attempt to show the other side too, without telling the story of the other."

*Is "Banu" an optimistic work, or only an unrealistic fantasy?*

"It's a place I'd like to go to. I don't look at it only with the eyes of whether it's possible, whether it's going to happen. I want to examine whether even fantasy has validity."

*In your works there's an attempt to cause the viewer to think about viewpoints and conventions, far beyond the aesthetics of the dance world.*

"Yes, my subjects don't come from dance. Dance is a tool, it's a means, and therefore I also want to pass through the pipeline of dance and emerge in another direction rather than remaining there. That's because this language isn't verbal and is open to many interpretations. On the one hand it gives tremendous freedom, and on the other it makes you wonder to what degree you are understood and what the audience takes with it. And how happy I am when it passes through the filters of the audience and creates private resonances for them regarding what they are seeing. I'm always very curious to know what they've really taken with them where it sank in and where it went."