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## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

24

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### Beyond our borders

Even with his new project being put on hold, choreographer Arkadi Zaides feels that 'conflict zones are heaven for art'

• By ORI J. LENKINSKI

In the words of John Lennon, life is what happens when you are busy making plans. For Arkadi Zaides, the past few weeks have been a perfect example of this very true sentence. Zaides, an established choreographer based in Tel Aviv, was about to launch the first incarnation of his new project *Moves Without Borders*. Two artists, Eszter Salamon from Hungary and Phillip Gehmacher of Austria, were meant to visit Israel to meet Zaides, give workshops to local dancers and begin what will hopefully still become a beautiful new initiative in the local dance landscape. And then the sirens went off and all of his plans went pear-shaped.

Zaides has made himself known over the past decade as a bold, innovative and socially aware choreographer. His most recent works *Quiet* and *Land Research* explore various socio-political themes. *Moves Without Borders* is in many ways the natural progression of the overall statement made in Zaides' performances, one

that reaches past the narrow scope of daily life and years for further communication. The culmination of months of work was meant to take place last week, with a performance scheduled in Tel Aviv.

First Gehmacher cancelled, followed by Salamon. Apparently the sizzling political environment in Israel was enough to keep the visitors away. Their cancellation, while unfortunate, only points to the necessity of Zaides' project. In the newsletter sent out about the turn of events Zaides wrote, "The cancellation once again reinforces our understanding that as a society, we are continually paying a heavy price for the ongoing violence in the region. We do hope that both Phillip and Eszter will join us in the near future."

For years, Israeli choreographers have fought the geographic isolation of the country by touring extensively and fostering ongoing collaborations with foreign theaters and companies. Zaides, whose career began as a dancer in Batsheva Dance Company, was among the throng of dance artists who became accustomed to subletting apartments and taking long

flights in the hopes of embedding himself in the international dance community.

However, in his travels, Zaides became acutely aware of the shortcomings of tours. While performing abroad expanded his horizons, the lasting impact of these engagements left room for the imagination. With *Moves Without Borders*, Zaides plans to fill in the gaps left otherwise open in such endeavors.

"The concept behind this project is that it has no home," he explained over a bowl of salad in central Tel Aviv. "It doesn't belong to any place. Each event is fitted to its location. The project will present opportunities for the local community to meet and interact with the visiting artists on many levels be it in panel discussions, conversations, workshops or performances. The artists don't just come and go. They leave a bit of themselves behind. I believe that each person involved will create ruptures that will echo in the field long after they have returned home."

For this project, Zaides received support from the Goethe Institute in Israel as well as the Austrian Embassy. Other involved bodies are the Academy of Music and Dance in Jerusalem, Seminar Hakibbutzim in Tel Aviv and several local theaters such as Tmuna Theater and the Teiva in Jaffa.

"Beyond the dance element," explained Zaides, "this project is connected with the academic or theoretical side of the art form. As such, it is important to me that these organizations will take part."

In the days preceding what was meant to be the opening of *Moves Without Borders*, Zaides himself was struggling with his existence in Israel and whether he would give in to the pull to calmer environs abroad.

"I wasn't born here, so for me, the option to leave is always present. I inherited the possibility to be transient in my body," he said. And though he is opposed to much of what the current government stand for, Zaides recognizes that this dissonance provides him with a fertile ground on which to create.

ARKADI ZAIDES (left) performing a short piece. (Nini Moshé) 'I wasn't born here [Israel], so for me, the option to leave is always present. I inherited the possibility to be transient in my body,' says choreographer Zaides. (Tay Weiser)

