

Dance Troupe to Tell 'Stories of the Soul'

by Kelly Hartog, Contributing Writer

Back in February 2004, the California-based Keshet Chaim Dance Ensemble (Rainbow of Life) premiered a new production titled, "Neshama - Stories of the Soul," at the Scottish Rite Auditorium in Los Angeles. Now, just over a year later, the company will present the show again at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza on April 3.

"Stories of the Soul" is a multimedia production incorporating an offbeat combination of modern dance and Israeli folk steps, original music by Uri Ophir and Sharon Farber, light and sound and narration with an accompanying slide show.

The two-hour sound and color production has been described as a kind of Judaism by the numbers — a straightforward and literal interpretation of the history of the Jewish people from creation to the birth of the State of Israel to the belief in the eventual coming of the Messiah.

The event is being co-sponsored by the Consulate General of Israel, The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, L.A. County Arts Commission, the Tel Aviv-Los Angeles Partnership, Shalom L.A. and the Alliance for the Arts.

The production was developed over three years by 60-year-old Eytan Avisar, Keshet Chaim's

founder and artistic director. He drew on his spiritual connections to Israel, following his turning to Orthodox Judaism about 10 years ago.

Avisar, an Israeli expatriate who moved to Los Angeles to marry, said the company's mission is to "express the global spirit of Judaism and Israeli culture throughout the world, and to combat prejudice and anti-Semitism through education and entertainment."

Established in 1983, Keshet Chaim is today considered one of the premiere dance companies rooted in Jewish dance, with an emphasis on interpreting and exploring Jewish values through its work. While the company focuses mainly on Israeli dance, its ethnically diverse troupe of 24 dancers includes members from Israel, Russia and South America, as well as the United States. For the "Neshama" production, Avisar has brought in guest choreographers Ilana Cohen and Tsion



Sona Yeloyan (top), Yossi Amor and Leah Bleiweis (left).

Photos by Barbara Silberstein



Marciano of Israel's Inbal Dance Theatre to assist him.

One of the highlights of "Neshama - Stories of the Soul" is the incorporation of song into Keshet Chaim's production. At the company's debut performance, the guest singer was popular Israeli performer David D'Or. This time, the special guest will be soprano coloratura Noa Dori, who has a four-octave range.

The soprano, who has just finished recording her second album, began her career at 14, performing in Israel and Germany. Today she is best known for her success on the European stage, appearing in everything from "The Magic Flute" to "West Side Story."

"Neshama - Stories of the Soul" will be performed on Sunday, April 3, at 3 p.m. at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza, 2100 Thousand Oaks Blvd. For tickets, ranging in price from \$26 to \$72, contact Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza box office (805) 449-2787 or go to www.ticketmaster.com. ●



Rebecca Silver Fisher (top and above)

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