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DANCE REVIEW

The Impulse at Its Purest, Racing Anew The Essence of the Kibbutz, From ZviDance, at Musa!

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The violinist Jane Chung with Ann Chiaverini, Elisa Osborne and Jon Eirich of [Dusan Tynek Dance Theater](#).

The world of the Israeli kibbutz and the broader Middle East comes to us in Zvi Gotheiner's "Dabke." Mr. Gotheiner has lived, danced and choreographed in New York since 1988, but he began life in a kibbutz. New last year, "Dabke" strikes me as the most enchanting piece I've seen in a long while — a little too long for its own good at 48 minutes, and yet continually surprising, even revelatory, throughout.

The work is one of several being shown at [Musa!](#), a two-week festival of dance with music concluding on Saturday at the Baruch Performing Arts Center. Mr. Gotheiner's group, [ZviDance](#), shares changing programs with two other companies, [Dusan Tynek Dance Theater](#) and [Cherylyn Lavagnino Dance](#); their works are largely to live music while Mr. Gotheiner's, though created with original scores by Scott Killian, a frequent collaborator, is performed to a recording. You'd have to attend at least three performances to catch all the repertory on offer from these three companies; I saw two, on Sunday and Monday evenings.

"Dabke," performed barefoot, is thrilling in how it continually realizes the changing human impulse that prompts people to dance. We keep witnessing different reasons that people dance, different elements of

humanity in dance. The performers are dressed simply by Reid Bartelme: T-shirts for both sexes, skirts for the four women, jeans for the men.

The dabke is a line dance, traditionally for men only, often performed at weddings and celebrations in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Israel and the Palestinian territories. But it is just Mr. Gotheiner's starting point. Music makes people dance communally, and the sense of community in "Dabke" is so strong that at times we feel that we are on a kibbutz. But dance is also something people do privately, alone or in couples, discovering things about themselves and each other they didn't know.

The basic footwork of the dabke is itself infectious. A rhythm often alternating between two stamping feet and one, it's so propulsive that dancers frequently zip across the stage. Mr. Gotheiner's dancers move their whole bodies, often powerfully. And at times they move in a way that is far from any folk idiom.

The piece also has a helpless stream-of-consciousness flow. Just as it becomes a formal series of male-female duets, it changes into something else. We're often reminded that this is about community — people re-enter as if catching one another in intimate moments — but this in turn has a wonderful effect on the solos, which often have a quality of intense, even reluctant, private disclosure. A man keeps starting to peel off his shirt but seems unsure about doing so; another does so later, and this becomes a declarative public act shared by others (including a woman).

In duets, the dominant role keeps changing. There are a few male-male duets that at first seem related to macho martial-arts behavior, but one of them gives way to suggestions of trembling vulnerability and disturbance. Layers of identity keep changing: we move between the ego and id. I hope to see "Dabke" again — it comes to the [Lincoln Center Out of Doors](#) festival on Aug. 3 — and to discover more work by Mr. Gotheiner.

Although the dances presented by Mr. Tynek and Ms. Lavagnino have their own voices, each one seems curiously caught between convention and idiosyncrasy. Ms. Lavagnino has choreographed the first, second and fourth movements of Schubert's Trio No. 2 in E flat (D. 929) for piano, violin and violoncello, played live, as a ballet called "Treize en Jeu" ("13 in Play") with 13 dancers; its eight women are on point. Mr. Tynek's "Fleur-de-Lis" (2007), "Apian Way" (2008) and "Widow's Walk" (2011) are in modern-dance style, barefoot, set respectively to music by Biber, Bach, and Lennie Tristano and Phil Kline.

Although Ms. Lavagnino's dancers pace and move in ways that acknowledge the music's pulse, she keeps saddling them with static arm positions — a hand placed at the back of the head, across the hip or on the thigh — in ways that seem to have no organic connection with the music or the rest of the dance. This gives it a strangely blocked quality: the dancers look purposeful but never free.

The most interesting moments of Mr. Tynek's dances, often found in mere transitions, are when he breaks away from symmetry, conventional musicality and politely orthodox male-female couplings. As his earliest piece, "Fleur-de-Lis" (excerpts only were shown), is certainly his least mature; its changing patterns are terribly tied to the time signature of the Biber music. His "Apian Way" looks happiest when it does something odd, as when two of a male trio, each balancing in arabesque, hold the third one in the air as if he were flying. When "Widow's Walk," though geometrically very ordered, starts to show the ways in which its men and women are in different zones and moods, it breaks briefly into real drama.

The Musa! festival continues through Saturday at the Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Avenue, at 25th Street; musafestival.org.