



(Tamar Lam)

dance

Exposed skin

Noa Dar crosses boundaries in her new work 'Skin'

• By ORI J. LENKINSKI

It has been almost eight years to the day since Noa Dar premiered a full-length evening performance for adult audiences. In October 2006, her tour-de-force creation *Tetris* was unveiled at the Acco Festival for Alternative Israeli Theater. At the time, Dar did not realize that nearly a decade would pass before she would find herself in such a position again. This weekend, Dar returns to the main stage with *Skin*, a choreography for four dancers, as part of the Artists Curate series at Warehouse 2 in Jaffa.

"I haven't made a piece that was significant for adults since *Tetris*," said Dar in a recent interview with *The Jerusalem Post*.

Dar speaks softly and takes time to carefully choose each word. Though small in stature, her piercing, light eyes and quiet confidence embolden her with a certain kind of magnetism. In *Tetris*, she took her audience outside of the conventional, proscenium theater and into an alternative space in which each viewer was outfitted with a stool to match his or her height. Ushered into a cave-like space, the participants in Dar's experiment were instructed to stand on their stools. It was then that the magic was revealed. A small cage fitted into the floor of the stage shielded each head. It was from behind the bars of these structures, on eye-level with the

dancers' feet, that the viewers took in the majority of *Tetris*.

The piece was an immediate success, receiving an Honorable Mention at the Acco Festival and a smattering of invitations to tour abroad. Despite its technical specificities, *Tetris* went on to be presented many times around Israel and further afield. For Dar, the piece became an esthetic calling card and eventually a tough act to follow.

"*Tetris* was a point of no return for me. In the years after, I made *Anu* and then *Banu*, but I wasn't whole with those pieces. I felt that they weren't new enough. I felt that I hadn't created something new, that I was repeating myself. After that I didn't want to make another piece that would go up at Suzanne Dellal. I wanted to find something else."

While she gathered strength and ideas, she kept busy creating shows for younger audiences. To her repertoire, which already including time-tested productions such as *Children's Games* and *The Dream is a Great Painter*, she added *Ananotza* in 2012.

"I assembled enough energy to search again," she said.

Last year, a newly fortified Dar reentered the studio.

"It was very exciting and moving. I started with very basic searches like looking for movement that evokes emotion or emotion that evokes movement. I conducted a new investigation using the body as

material, like one works with dough. I went into this process as one does with a laboratory and that approach remained present in the work."

Skin is an exploration of the physical and emotional boundaries between the outside world and us.

"I thought was about the body as a place of the last escape or haven," she said. "It is more internal than your house or your room. It is a place like a fort where people regroup, only there can you be with yourself. From there, I went on to bigger ideas where the inside represented habits, which are their own kind of fort or regularities. What happens when those things are disrupted? How do we cope with the changes? From all of that I stayed with the place of friction between the inside and outside, where our skin is the border between inside and outside. How do we strip down the border to meet the outside world or another person? Is it a flexible boundary? What do we need to cross that boundary?"

Over a year's time, Dar and her dancers pushed themselves well beyond their individual and collective comfort zones to decipher where their boundaries lied and how they could surpass them. Dar asked of her dancers, Efrat Levy, Mor Nardimon, Alon Shtoyer and Noa Shavit to join her on a ride that took them through the full emotional spectrum.

The result is, in Dar's words, not easy to partake in.

"There were a lot of revelations, a lot of things that I understood anew. There was a kind of exposure and intimacy that was new to me. That said there is something in this piece that goes very far, to the edge. It is hard to absorb and hard to experience for the dancers and the audience."

To reflect the concept of borders, Dar decided to seat the audience in the round.

"I wanted the audience to create that boundary between the inside and the outside," she said.

Skin will be performed three times over the course of Dar's Artist Curate weekend. Each evening will feature an installation and performance by visual artist Nati Shamia-Opher as well as a concert by musician and longtime Noa Dar Dance Group collaborator Uri Frost.

Skin will be presented at Warehouse 2 on July 17 and 19 at 9 p.m. and on July 18 at 10 p.m. Tickets cost 90 NIS. For more information, visit www.choreographers.org.il.