

About Batsheva Dance Company

Based in Tel Aviv, Israel, **Batsheva Dance Company** is currently celebrating their 50th anniversary. Over the decades, the company has been critically acclaimed and popularly considered among the foremost contemporary dance companies in the world. Today, Batsheva Dance Company and its young dancer troupe, Batsheva Ensemble, perform over 250 times each year, bringing in over 75,000 spectators from around the world.

Batsheva was founded in 1964 by Baroness Batsheva de Rothschild. Pioneering American choreographer Martha Graham was appointed the first artistic advisor. The Israeli dancers trained intensively in Graham's contemporary technique, and some of the choreographer's most acclaimed works were developed with the young company. Many of Graham's followers created work for Batsheva's repertory, cementing a bond between the dance communities in both countries.

Throughout the 1970s, the company's creative directors and most of its choreographers still came from outside of Israel. In the 1980s, though, the Israeli team of David Dvir and Shelley Shir assumed the helm. Under their leadership, the company moved away from Graham's influence, making classical ballet the main source for training and technique in the troupe.

This changed in 1990, with the appointment of **Ohad Naharin** as artistic director. Naharin was no stranger to the Batsheva Dance Company—he had started his dance career with the group 15 years earlier, before moving to York to study and perform. By the time Naharin returned to take on the role of artistic director, he had made a name for himself as a choreographer on three continents, with work featuring a signature style of fluid, textured movement.

The key to this distinguishing style is **Gaga**, a method of training developed by Naharin himself. Gaga is radically different from most dance training. There are no mirrors allowed in the studio, and dancers do not perform or practice specific combinations or steps. Instead, they respond to verbal instructions calling attention to specific body parts, actions or characteristics. Smooth, sharp, strong, soft, shaking — the dancers explore a range of movement qualities or dynamics, with each individual bringing their own personal touch.

The performance you will attend features **Sadeh 21**, the centerpiece of Batsheva's 50th Anniversary Tour. "Sadeh" is the Hebrew word for "field". In this work, there are 21 fields of movement, each presenting a different way of moving and existing in the world.



DANCE VOCABULARY

Modern Dance

A dance form developed in the early 20th century as a reaction to classical ballet. Dancers and choreographers use their own technique, creativity, and body to create new dances and try to be as original as they can. This is also known as Contemporary Dance.

Movement Vocabulary

A set of movements or a style of dancing which is specific to, or characteristic of, a choreographer, dancer, or dance company.

Phrase

A short combination of movements. This is the smallest unit of movement in an entire dance. Phrases are put together to create movement sequences.

Repertory

All the works—specific plays, dances, musical pieces, etc.—that a company performs.

Score

An organized set of notations of all of the instrumental and/or vocal parts of a musical composition

Dynamics

The variations of energy, intensity or emotional quality in the performance of dance.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

What does it mean to say that "movement has meaning"?

Can dance tell a story or present an idea?

Can a dance make you feel a certain way?

Can any kind of movement be considered dance? Why or why not?

The Bigger Picture: Dance Practices

Ballet

Movement quality is elegant and precise. Posture is upright, lines are straight and balanced. Movement is constantly in opposition to gravity, lifting away from the ground.

Critiques and instructions are very specific, demanding precision in technique and form.

Each dancer focuses on themselves, striving to meet the specific aesthetic requirements established centuries ago.

Contemporary

Evolving from classical ballet, movement is created with both established forms and new, individual dance vocabularies. Contemporary movement includes broken or asymmetrical lines, but often maintains the weightlessness of ballet.

Dancers are given specific critiques and guidance. The focus is often on presenting a certain emotion or impression through movement.

Group work and partner work requires dancers to experience movement both as an individual and part of a larger whole. A company's dance vocabulary may evolve with each new member.

Gaga

Movement qualities vary widely from day to day and dancer to dancer. The practice centers on belief in the healing, dynamic, ever-changing power of personal movement. The movement is often described as textured, as it has so many different aspects.

Instructors offer broad and general guidance, and asking dancers to explore their own instinctive movements, paying attention to their emotional and physical state.

With no mirrors and little contact with others, dancers focus on their individual experience of dance, while acknowledging they are not alone, "every person with himself and every other."

Go Gaga

Here are some instructions used in *gaga* dance classes. Try them for yourself:

- Imagine kneading dough with your hands
- Draw a circle with your hip, your elbow, the top of your head.
- Become a string of spaghetti in a boiling water
- Imagine the floor is getting very hot
- float
- shake
- Imagine little explosions going off inside your body
- Move as if your flesh has melted off your body and you are just bones.

Remember, don't look in the mirror, just move in the way that feels natural to you.

You're the Critic: Performance Review

Put yourself in the shoes of a dance critic. In 2-3 short paragraphs, review your visit to Royce Hall to see Batsheva Dance Company. Here are some things to think about when writing your review:

The Dance

- How did the performance make you feel?
- What words come to mind when you think of performance?
- Did you experience or learn something new?
- Was there a theme or idea in the work? What was it?
- What was your favorite piece or moment? Why?

The Overall Experience

- Would you recommend this performance to a friend?
- Would you attend another performance by Batsheva?
- Why or why not?

If you need some more help, look in the newspaper for dance reviews in the Arts section. Read a few to see how they are structured, what is included and what is not.

We'd love to hear your feedback—send us your review!

DESIGN FOR SHARING

K-12 ARTS EDUCATION

PREPARE FOR YOUR VISIT TO UCLA

- Please bring the attached Directions for Bus Drivers with you in case your driver does not have proper directions.
- Design for Sharing volunteers will meet your bus and direct you to the theater; please be ready to leave the bus when directed to do so.
- Count your students and teachers before you arrive; the ushers will need to know how many people you have before they can seat you.
- Adequate adult supervision is important to the success of these events. Chaperones may need to supervise students in restrooms and be alert when students are entering or leaving the auditorium. Adults are expected to sit with students and help maintain appropriate standards of behavior.
- The hall is opened for seating one-half hour before the performance is scheduled to begin. We make every effort to begin on time, but occasionally the opening is delayed five to ten minutes due to late arrivals from other schools or technical problems.
- Restrooms are located to your left as you enter the theater. Have your students use the restrooms before the performance begins.
- **Flash photography is not allowed in the theater**, as it can be dangerous for the performers - the flash may temporarily blind them causing an accident. Use of any flash camera, laser pointer or recording device whatsoever may be cause for ejection from the hall.
- Remind your students that chewing gum, loud talking and running are inappropriate in the theater, even before and after the actual performance.
- Please do not allow students to bring lunches or snacks to their seats. Lunches can be stored in the lobby during the performance.
- Please remain seated when the performance is over. Schools will be dismissed a few at a time.
- Self-guided tour information and campus maps are available in the lobby. We hope you'll make the most of your visit to UCLA and explore the campus. If you don't have time to cover it all, take a stroll through the sculpture garden or pop into Powell Library's historic rotunda.

