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'Tis the Season for collaboration

For the next three months, Israel and Switzerland will enjoy a diverse cultural exchange

• By ORI J. LENKINSKI

In 1897, the groundwork for the State of Israel was laid out at the Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. Though perhaps the most famous, this event was one of many markers of the strong connection between the two countries. This season, for the first time, more than a century later, Israel and Switzerland will enjoy a diverse cultural exchange. Engineered by the Culturescapes organization, the coming three months will bring each country the best and brightest artists the other has to offer.

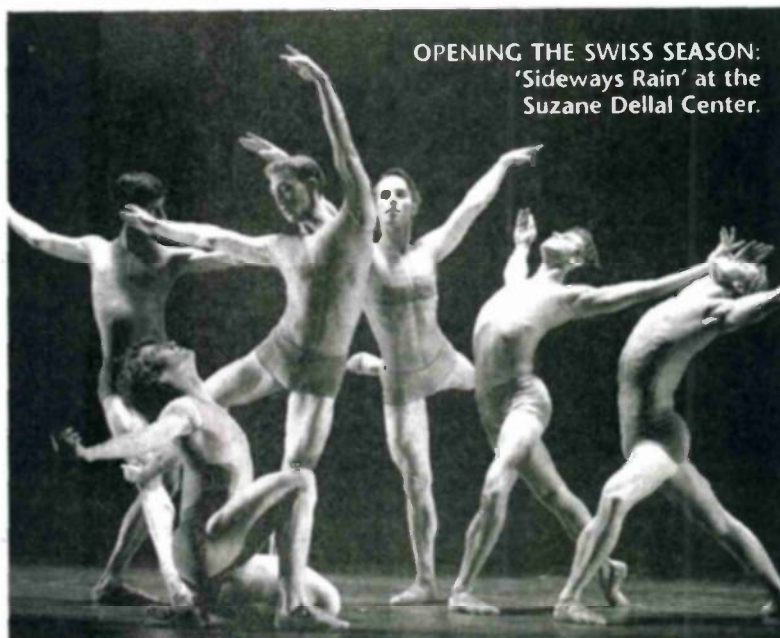
Since 2003, Culturescapes has promoted exchanges between artists from a number of European countries. Focusing on one country per year, Culturescapes curates and produces a multi-disciplinary festival in which artists from the chosen country perform in Switzerland. Last year, for the first time, they expanded their geographic range to include China. This year, despite harsh criticism, they set their sights on Israel.

At the beginning of September, Culturescapes kicked off with *Both Upon a Time* by Ofira Hennig and Ensemble in Basel. The festival will continue through December with performances by Israeli artists such as Batsheva Dance Company, Yossi Berg and Oded Graf, Carolina, Kutiman and Yasmeen Godder.

In addition to the impressive programming in Switzerland, the festival has broadened its activities to include a host of performances in Israel by Swiss artists and co-creations between Swiss and Israelis.

The Swiss Season in Israel will open with two dance performances at the Suzanne Dellal Center. The first is Fabrice Mazliah and laonnis Mandafounis' duet *P.A.D.*, followed by *Sideways Rain* by the Alias/Guilherme Botelho Company.

In *P.A.D.*, Mazliah and Mandafounis invite the audience to sit on all four sides of the stage. Their duet, which premiered in 2007, is a look at intimacy between two dancers whose relationship to one another is unclear. At times, the two seem to be lovers or close friends. But moments later the energy between the two gifted dancers shifts, painting a picture of the chilled



OPENING THE SWISS SEASON: 'Sideways Rain' at the Suzanne Dellal Center.

separation between strangers.

Mazliah and Mandafounis met several years ago while dancing in Europe. The two are former members of Netherlands Dance Theater, and both currently perform with the Forsythe Company of Germany.

dance

Sideways Rain by Guilherme Botelho, a piece for 15 dancers, premiered in late 2010 in Geneva. Throughout the course of the piece, the dancers traverse the stage repeatedly, seeming never to find what they are looking for. They crawl, walk, run and tumble through the space, creating a sense of extended time.

Botelho hails from Brazil, where he began dancing as a young man. Drawn to Switzerland by the works of Oscar Oriaz, Botelho exchanged sunny beaches for snowcapped mountains. He established his company Alias in 1994 and has since presented his uniquely physical choreography around the world.

Other performances to come in the Swiss Season include the co-production *When You're Dead, You're Done* by Israeli visual artist Tchelet Weisstub and Swiss choreographer Tabea Martin. This theater piece will present the audience with a variety of spaces in which they will view

different scenes put together by the two artists and a string of collaborators.

Another sure highlight of the festival is the collaboration between the Basler Madrigalisten and the Israeli Camerata Jerusalem. The Basler Madrigalisten is a choir of 24 singers with a wide repertoire. The Israeli Camerata Jerusalem is a chamber orchestra. Together, they will present Handel's *Messiah* in Israel and in Switzerland.

Throughout the course of the Swiss Season in Israel, several artists will be hosted in residencies around the country. One such residency was awarded by the Daniela Passal Center in Ein Kerem to Haus Am Green, otherwise known as the artists Barbara Meyer Cesta and Rudolf Steiner. This initiative, called The Mamuta Project, provides the artists with everything they need to produce multi-disciplinary visual art. Mamuta will also present *Kav*, an artistic encounter between Einat Amir who is currently working in Switzerland and Guy Itzhaki in Israel. The results will be on display throughout October.

P.A.D. will run from October 2-4. *Sideways Rain* runs October 5 and 6. For tickets, visit www.suzannedellal.org.il. For more information about Culturescapes, visit www.israel.culturescapes.ch