

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Bobbi Jene

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, September 27th, 2017

Over the past decade or so, and especially following the death of Pina Bausch, Ohad Naharin has risen to be one of the leading figures in the world of contemporary dance. Just last year the documentary **Mr. Gaga** about this enigmatic genius and movement inventor sealed his stature, helping to elevate him if not to household name celebrity then perhaps to more mainstream status. Not that he is not deserving of this rank, he is, resoundingly so. Naharin's work is powerful, raw, demanding, and brilliant. Pushed to bold limits, his dancers are a special breed – technically polished and emotionally riveting to watch. And in the wake of Naharin's retirement as Artistic Director of Israel's Batsheva Dance Company, I find myself wondering if filmmakers are going to begin regularly mining the company ranks to find new subjects for documentary films.



Bobbi Jene in rehearsal with Bat Sheva

With the fervor over the recently released documentary **Bobbi Jene** one might think so. It is a compelling film that explores all at once the transition from youth to adulthood, idealism to reality, and from company dancer to independent choreographer. Bobbi Jene is a captivating dancer and personality, quintessentially American but interestingly enough, involved in a very non-traditional creative search. The film explores her transition as she leaves both a decade of prominence in Israel dancing with Bat Sheva and the love of her life in order to return to the US and create her own boundary breaking work, ultimately finding fulfillment in the process.



Bobbi Jene pushing boundaries

With direction and cinematography by Elvira Lind, **Bobbi Jene** delves into very raw and not always comfortable personal territory, especially as regards her love life and work. In the beginning especially I often found myself wishing for less information, or “more mystery and less history” as they say. Bobbi Jene is a performer after all, and I sometimes wondered if some of the behavior we bore witness to was *because* of the camera rather than in spite of it. But in the end I was won over. Her uncompromising search seemed genuine, and I especially loved her fearless ability to let herself be vulnerable. And, not unlike many other professions, the dance world can be a man's world and I found myself rooting for her success, which this documentary itself can only support.

Produced by Julie Leerskov and Sara Stockmann, co-produced by Mathilde Dedye, **Bobbi Jene** is an important film not just because it's about cutting edge dance, but because the audience goes

with her on a journey into territory that is not always explored, asking questions that are not always asked; when to go it alone as an artist and how much risk to take when you do.

Bobbi Jene opened in New York on September 22nd and is opening in LA on October 6th.

Go. See. It.

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