

ZE'EVA COHEN SOLO DANCE REPERTORY

200 West 72 Street (Suite 20) New York, NY 10023

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She Makes You Think of Isadora

By Hewell Tircuit

High art can be, and indeed should be, entertaining. The wonder of dancer Ze'eva Cohen's weekend performances at the Margaret Jenkins Dance Studio was that she not only accepts this principal, but achieved a flawless balance between intellectual and venal considerations.

It was one of the most immediately appealing and impressive dance debuts San Francisco has seen in years.

Cohen's art is original as well as personal. She does not follow a school or fit any known (to me) category. A fine actress as well as a flawless dance technician, she has blended modern dance with a rather severely classical ethnic style.

More than once, one thought of Isadora Duncan. But whereas Duncan's simplistic manner drew on ancient Greek models — or rather, what she *thought of* as classical Greek — Cohen revels in complexity, and the influence is from further east: Israel and the Arab countries.

Her program opened with her now "Three Landscapes," followed by James Waring's enormously impressive "32 Variations in C minor" (the finest Beethoven dance setting yet), Anna Sokolow's "Escape" and Margalit Oved's large "Mothers of Israel."

Folk elements were developed rather than merely used. Yet one never had a feeling of parody. Cohen does not gloss over ethnic references with slick showbiz stunts — as, for instance, those awful Russian folk companies do.

Eloquence and gravity are her aim, and achievement. The only exception was the Sokolow "Escape," apparently a study of a frustrated dance hall belle going to seed — the choreographic equivalent of warm, flat beer.

But in the rhythmic confetti of the Beethoven Variations, where virtually every note is gestured, Cohen was astounding. The piece is masterful and the performance utterly brilliant.

In "Mothers of Israel," Cohen had to present four successive portraits: Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel. That meant a woman in her 90s, a giddy young girl, a maturing woman forced on a husband who loves her not and a deserted lover.

It was a sensational tour de force. Not only was the choreography superb and the dancing likewise, but the dramatic fire such that one actually saw these women and their situations. One's heart broke for them.

There is high art for you, and there was not a dull moment or sag all evening. Cohen is a genius in the field.