

DANCE | DANCE REVIEW

# A Search for Reconciliation From the Mideast to America

## David Dorfman and Korhan Basaran Troupes at BAM Fisher

By BRIAN SEIBERT AUG. 15, 2014

The main purpose of DanceMotion USA, a cultural diplomacy program run by the Brooklyn Academy of Music for the State Department, is to send American troupes abroad. Yet the program also benefits New Yorkers directly by having an American company bring back a foreign one for a free, collaborative performance here. These visits have proven illuminating, even if the arranged artistic alliances haven't always gelled.

At the BAM Fishman Space on Thursday, David Dorfman Dance, back from a four-week tour of Turkey, Armenia and Tajikistan, teamed up with the Korhan Basaran Company from Istanbul, augmented by two Armenian dancers. Where previous DanceMotion participants have buttressed a short collaborative piece with repertory works from each troupe, Mr. Dorfman and Mr. Basaran went all the way, joining forces for the hourlong "Unsettled."

The chosen theme was "reconciliation," and it was remarkable how well the two companies, both packed with powerful dancers, merged. The work teemed with groups pushing and shoving, but it did not set one troupe against the other. The sharpest contrast — in the opening moments and in two later face-off duets — was between the choreographers: Mr. Basaran, tall, with a tendency to collapse inward,

and Mr. Dorfman, squat, always hurling his energy out. Yet the aesthetic kinship between them was also apparent in eruptive rhythms and labile emotions.

The music, composed and played live by Sam Crawford, Liz de Lise, Jesse Manno and Timothy Quigley, beguilingly blended Western and Middle Eastern styles and instrumentation. It borrowed the folk song “Sari Gyalin” (or “Sari Gelin”), which in Turkish, Armenian and English versions laments the failure of love across ethnic divides.

A few scenes — for example, a forced march — could be read as specific allusions to the bloody history between Turks and Armenians, but much of the work’s tension was cannily translated into the power dynamics of the choreographic process. In its strongest segment, Evrim Akyay, a slinky Turkish dancer with a menacing presence, directed the motions of an ingenuous American, Kendra Portier, as if in rehearsal for this show. The more he yelled at her in Turkish and slapped her around, the brighter her smile.

It was typical, though, how the power of that scene was squandered as Ms. Portier turned to audience members and implored them to move closer together, vocalizing her needs in dancerly double entendres (“I need to be moved”). Similarly, another scene swerved from infantile humor to a sharp evocation of the coercion in making people say they’re sorry, only to end with weeping on the ground. A shrewd point about forced reconciliations got belabored in a manner that was itself coercive.

Still, it is to the credit of all involved that “Unsettled,” after a celebratory group dance, had the honesty to remain unsettled. What resonated was a moment before the end, when Mr. Dorfman, having failed to force his friendship on Mr. Basaran, took a line from the folk song and allowed it to expand into a humble question for everyone: “Oh tell me please, what can I do?”

“Unsettled” ends Saturday at Fishman Space in BAM Fisher, 321 Ashland Place, near Lafayette Avenue, Fort Greene, Brooklyn; 718-636-4100, bam.org.

A version of this review appears in print on August 16, 2014, on Page C5 of the New York edition with the headline: A Search for Reconciliation From the Mideast to America.

# The New York Times

Discover the truth with us. Select the package that works for you.  
Choose annual billing and save up to 40% every year. You may cancel anytime.

Basic

\$2.75/week

Billed as \$143 every year

Get basic

Basic Digital Access includes:

Access to NYTimes.com and all NYTimes apps

Unlimited article access, anytime, anywhere

Learn more ►

All Access

\$3.75/week

Billed as \$195 every year

Get All Access

Includes everything in Basic, plus:

Times Insider Access, including behind-the-scenes stories, exclusive events, podcasts, and e-books

1 complimentary digital subscription to give anyone you'd like

Learn more ►

Home Delivery

+ All Access

\$6.93/week

Billed as \$360 every year\*

Get Home Delivery

Includes everything in All Access, plus:

Customized delivery options such as Sunday only, Fri.-Sun., weekday delivery, or daily delivery

The weekly Sunday magazine and monthly T Magazine

2 complimentary digital subscriptions to give anyone you'd like

Learn more ►

\*Home delivery price based on Sunday delivery.

Prices vary based on delivery location and frequency.

© 2017 The New York Times Company