

VILLAGE VOICE

Dancing on Strings

by Deborah Jowitz
April 30 - May 6, 2003



Suspended animation: Ermira Goro and Colleen Thomas in
Rein, Bellow
(photo: Richard Termine)

Part surreal vaudeville, part circus, and part toy store after midnight: That's *Oyster*, brought by the Inbal Pinto Dance Company to the Joyce in late April. When the performers are not controlled by suspended harnesses, leashes, or costumes, they dance as if invisible forces were jerking them around. Yet this creation by the wildly imaginative Israeli team of choreographer Pinto and director Avshalom Pollak avoids the darker implications of control. *Oyster* is whimsical, a delight for the eye.

The red curtain lifts in scallops to reveal a lit-up proscenium arch and, behind that, in a false back wall, a smaller light-framed opening. Occasionally a third, even smaller curtained "stage" is wheeled on. The performers sport white makeup and spiky blond wigs, except the tall red-wigged Michal Almogi, muzzled by her black turtleneck; the dumpy sixtyish Rina Rosenbaum, dressed like a child clown (spiky gray wig); and Yuval Sussler and Zvi Fishzon, imprisoned in the same giant overcoat, who have to be wheeled on and off for their mime acts, since one is standing on a concealed platform to make him loom above the other.

Two ballerinas in tutus hop like frogs on leashes held by Rosenbaum. Two dance, their wrists connected to their ankles by red ribbons. Edan Gorlicki, wearing a multi-tailed black coat and trousers (the ensemble uniform), manipulates a rope that causes Noga Harmelin to soar over her lover (Gwyn Emberton) or float down into his embrace; in one transcendent moment, she tiptoes along his outstretched arm as if it were a tree branch. Women wearing flesh-colored cloches and curiously wrapped outfits that bare their legs walk on, stiff and hunched: the world's oldest chorus line. The music ranges from opera to tango to pop to Yma Sumac.

The Siamese twins (separated in the end), Almogi, and Rosenbaum sometimes watch and applaud the acts. We applaud, too—for the wit, the cleverness, and the odd beauty.