



(Marc Damage)

More than a memory

Christian Rizzo presents 'Based on a True Story' at the Israel Festival

• By ORIJ. LENKINSKI

Memory works in mysterious ways. Sometimes an image or a passing experience can lodge itself in our subconscious for years, its importance surfacing long after the fact.

Christian Rizzo's dance piece *Based on a True Story*, which will be performed next week as part of the Israel Festival, is a voyage into a personal memory of the choreographer's. In the work, Rizzo does not attempt to recreate the event but rather to capture the emotional impact the scene had on him.

"Some years ago, I saw a piece of Turkish folk dance. It was performed by men, and I was really surprised by what I saw – by the energy and fragility I saw in these men. It had this element that you don't see very often: not the idea of men as wild but rather as a fragile community that must share this tenderness together. It was powerful," Rizzo recounts.

"I didn't do any research about Turkish dance. At the beginning of the project, I focused on the memory I had of this dance. I wanted to find male dancers who came from the Mediterranean. I wanted to look at what it means for us to dance, for each of us. I think the Turkish aspect was more like the pretext because I was more concerned with the memory I had of the experience of seeing the dance and not recreating the dance itself," he explains.

Rizzo, 52, is one of the most prominent choreographers in France today. Born and raised in Cannes, he has worked throughout the country, with periods spent in Paris, Lille and Montpellier. He does not hail from the dance world but from the fashion, music and visual art spheres. As such, Rizzo's choreographic work is visually and experientially holistic, blending together gesture, dance, live music and design. In 2015, he was appointed artistic director of the National Choreographer Center in

dance

Montpellier.

To create what he considers "a masculine laboratory to understand the possibilities of relationships between men," Rizzo called upon eight dancers. He had no image in mind when auditioning the men, going only on gut instinct.

"I had this instinctive choice of people who were ready for an adventure. Of course, the physical capabilities are important, but I found something that I can't put my finger on – people that I would like to invite to a dance. I guess I knew that working with these people could help me understand myself," he says.

To the cast of dancers, Rizzo added two rock & roll drummers. This choice changed the piece from Rizzo's original memory, piecing together the vibe and energy of the new community that was forming through the process.

"Why drums and why these drummers? In fact, when I decided to work on the piece, I knew that I wanted to work on connecting with rhythm in a very simple way. I decided to make a connection between dance and rhythm. I could work with electronic sound or with musicians, but finally I thought that the easiest thing that I know is drums because I can find drums in tribal music and in rock. The possibility of the connection between tribal and rock bands is something that I love. Very quickly it was not about one drum. I had a dream that I would have one, but then I saw that I needed two so that the rhythm could appear as a dialogue between the two musicians," he explains.

The dance piece begins in silence, with all members in stillness. And then, in a flash, the storm of sound and movement takes hold.

"There's this moment, before anything happens. We look at each other and there's this feeling, this wavelength that passes between us that says, 'Okay, let's start.' That moment when nothing has appeared and we know that everyone will start. The moment I love the best is the first second that nobody moves and when everybody gets connected to start the piece. It's an invisible moment," he says.

Christian Rizzo will present 'Based on a True Story' on June 13 at 9 p.m. at the Jerusalem Theatre. For more information, visit www.israel-festival.org.