

The right moves for Mr Right

South African-born choreographer Daniella Lacob speaks to **LEXI LANDSMAN** about the Jewish stigma of being left on the shelf and how it inspired her first show in Sydney.

AT 26, South African-born choreographer and current NIDA student Daniella Lacob believes “she’s on the shelf”.

“I’m sure every Jewish girl can relate to it,” Lacob laughs. “This idea that if you’re over 25 and unmarried, you’re on the shelf. Well at least, that is, according to my grandmother and my mother.”

Having moved to Sydney from Johannesburg at the beginning of the year for a National Institute Dramatic Arts (NIDA) movement studies course, Lacob is exploring that idea for her first production, *Miss Fits*, staging at NIDA from August 28-30.

“I’ve been on dates galore with real nebbishes, from guys with twitches to the ultimate romantic who wants to have picnics in the middle of the Botanical Gardens in the pouring rain. I’ve done it all and I haven’t quite found that match. It gets to this point when you have to ask: ‘Am I ever going to find my destiny; am I ever going to find this beshert?’”

Inspired by her personal experiences and of many single Jewish girls, Lacob has focused the physical theatre piece on the descent of madness we fall into when we fall in and out of love.

“It’s exploring themes of compromise,



compatibility and comfort within relationships, and I guess it’s ultimately saying that love is totally unpredictable. Whatever your preconceived idea of who your perfect match is going to be, you can never really know.”



South African choreographer Daniella Lacob (right and below) rehearses with the cast of her first production, *Miss Fits*, which opens next week.

Miss Fits is one of three physical theatre pieces that will form part of *Bodyline 08*, a production where movement studies students direct first-year NIDA dramatic arts students.

With only a two-week period to devise the piece, the pressure is on, but Lacob thrives on the creativity of the workshops.

“Physical theatre just blows my mind away. You can use your voice and your body. It’s nice to push boundaries. It has ability to empower and educate communities.”

Having worked in various capacities as a choreographer, dancer, actress and teacher in South Africa, *Miss Fits* is her first production that strays away from social issues, and instead looks at humanity – our strengths and weaknesses.

“Nothing quite taps into our history and our emotions as much as love and our experiences of love. So I just thought for a change, I wanted to go there.”

Having always wanted to study abroad, Lacob instantly applied when she learned about the NIDA program, but the application process wasn’t easy.

She had to answer a series of questions and then create and film her work and send it through on videotapes. To stand out, Lacob decided to go one step further and filmed herself answering the questions so they could get a sense of her as an individual. And it worked.

“I guess life and Hashem guided me towards NIDA. I was just lucky at the end of the day. I grabbed the opportunity with both hands and pursued it.”

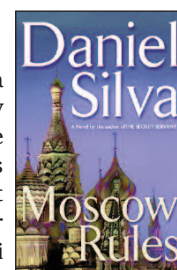
But with a few more months to go till the one-year course concludes, her greatest problem is that she has to make the decision whether to return to South Africa.

“It’s all very exciting here. Australia so far has awakened so much creativity. I just feel like I’ve got so much to learn still.”

Bodyline 08 shows at the Parade Playhouse, NIDA from August 28-30. Enquiries: (02) 9697 7613; boxoffice@paradetheatres.com.au.

Israeli novel hits Number 1

NATHAN BURSTEIN



THE Mossad’s aura of invincibility may be a thing of the past among the agency’s Middle Eastern foes, but on American bestseller lists, at least, the Israeli super spy is still number one.

Moscow Rules author Daniel Silva’s latest novel about former Mossad agent Gabriel Allon, debuted atop *The New York Times*’ bestsellers list last weekend, soaring past recent releases by James Patterson and Nora Roberts to claim the chart’s peak position. Silva’s latest book, which opens with Allon enjoying some downtime in central Italy, soon sends the character racing off to Moscow, where a former KGB operative has brokered a deal to share arms with Al Qaeda.

The eighth instalment in the Gabriel Allon series, *Moscow Rules* follows earlier Silva thrillers that dealt with Saudi support for terrorism and with looted art kept by the Swiss after the Holocaust. An “Allon Dossier” located on Silva’s website offers a strikingly Israel-specific biography of the character, describing the spy-turned-art restorer as a graduate of Jerusalem’s Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, and as the bearer of such aliases as Natan Golani, Ehud Landau and Gideon Argov.

A native of Israel’s Jezreel Valley, the cultured Allon speaks five languages and maintains residences in Cornwall, England, and Jerusalem, with his weapon of choice and favourite opera listed, respectively, as the Beretta pistol and *La Bohème*.

Silva, a convert to Judaism and a former Cairo correspondent for United Press International, has seen his earlier novels translated into 25 languages.

According to the author’s website, negotiations are underway to adapt the Israeli spy thrillers for the big screen.

THE FORWARD

Kabbalistic perspective on the art of love

LEXI LANDSMAN

IT was the mysticism of kabbalah that inspired Sydney artist Yaeli Ohana’s latest exhibition, *Love Letters*, which opened at NG Art Gallery last week.

“Essentially, kabbalah talks a lot about connections and love and unity, and those are very universal themes throughout time,” Ohana, 35, explains. “This show is attempting to celebrate those ideals – to live in a world where there is a real love and genuine connection between us.”



Yaeli Ohana with several small-scale drawings in her current exhibition.

The exhibition, a selection of 40 works, will feature observational drawings of semi-transparent objects set against abstract washes of paint. The text included in the works are direct quotes from kabbalistic texts, particularly from the poetry of the Song of Songs and the esoteric spirituality of the Zohar and Shamati.

Ohana has been studying kabbalah for the past three years and says that the show is a way to visually express some of the ideas that she’s been studying.

“It’s an attempt to celebrate the process of the uncovering or learning the very beautiful and meaningful ancient knowledge passed down for so long. To me, it also evokes ideas of revealing and concealing things and my works are very much about that – they visually include layers of paint that both reveal and conceal some of the objects I’m drawing.”

On a micro level, she explains, there’s personal history to the works, with some of the paintings relating to personal stories of love.

The idea of the exhibition began on a holiday with a boyfriend at the time, when she began to collect natural objects as a sentimental way to remember the experience. After that, she started collecting objects from places that were significant to her – from flowers, plants, shells to even weeds. She then looked at the idea of love letters.

“When you write a love letter, there’s an excitement of doing that – writing and receiving it and the nervousness of finding



Yaeli Ohana’s exhibition, *Love Letters*, is inspired by kabbalistic texts.

the right words. So I’ve integrated the found objects with personal stories of love.”

Born in Montpellier, France, Ohana moved to Australia at a young age, living in Orange first and later relocating to Sydney. In 1997, Ohana lived in Jerusalem and studied at Bezalel Academy of Art for a year.

Ohana has completed a recent residency at The Hill End Artist Studio near Bathurst, and when she is not producing her own work,

she teaches at the Brett Whiteley Studios, the Art Gallery of NSW and the University of Technology, Sydney.

Ohana will appear in conversation with ABC radio journalist Rachel Kohn on September 2, as part of NG Art Gallery’s Feast of the Senses dinner.

Love Letters runs until September 6 at NG Art Gallery, Chippendale. Enquiries: www.ngart.com.au; (02) 9318 2992.