

it's friday! art

Story-telling theatre busts Israeli myths on stage

by **Preeti Verma Lal**

Amos, the field mouse, is trapped in an irrigation pipe of a Kibbutz field on the slopes of Mount Carmel. He struggles, yelps and remembers all the laws of survival, but everything fails him. Desperate, he starts gnawing at the aluminum pipe. Just when he thinks that life is a few bites away, someone turns the large faucet on. Amos thrashes about, he kicks, he fights. But the gushing water is ruthless — it stifles that last breath out of him. Amos is dead. Red petals are showered on him but he is dead.

"But there is nothing aesthetic about death." The voice of the actor booms on the dark stage. The audience at IIC's Fountain Lawns stays hushed.



Israeli actors Shirley Gal-Segev (left) and Tali Kark in the three-play presentation, titled *Alternating Perspectives*

For Amos is not a field mouse, he is a metaphor. He is you, me, everyone, struggling against life, against Nature and that uncertainty conveniently

called *Destiny*. Amos is an allegory, its reality stark, its spoken imagery biting and its live music chilling.

Story-telling theatre is the

forte of Ruth Kanner, Israel's celebrated actor, adapter, choreographer, teacher of theatre art. And on Monday, story telling was at its best as Kanner presented *Alternating Perspectives*, a collage of three plays on a minimal stage with barely any props and merely three actors. But Kanner does not need them, for her stories are "not about tangible landscapes, it is about inner landscapes." True to her form and voice, in *Discovering Elifjah*, a lone man in a blue station wagon stumbles on a field full of dead men, a play taking cue from the harrowing 1973 Yom Kippur war. As one actor pretends death on the stage, you almost see the horror in his drooping neck and the narrative of S Yizhar, who evokes moral chaos callously. As the

soldier lay dead, the station wagon asks: "Did his mother miss beat when he died? Perhaps not. For she does not even know he is dead." The reality gets more stinging in *The Woman Who Preferred to Search For Food*. In this story by Orli Castel-Bloom, a woman searches for food in a hunger-stricken country. This again is not a story; it is a surreal commentary on the disintegration of some Israeli myths. The English script had large dosages of Hebrew, but that was hardly a deterrent; words held sway and storytelling the-atre found new ground through actors Ronen Babluki, Shirely Gal-Segev and Tali Kark. If only the acoustics weren't so flawed, that evening story-telling theatre would have been perfect.

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