

Badke (remix) laGeste & Stereo48 / KVS

A powerful remix of Palestinian identity

Twelve years ago, les ballets C de la B presented *Badke*, a piece that channelled Palestinian identity through dance in a remarkable way. Now, laGeste & Stereo48 revisit the powerful original with *Badke(remix)*. This remix feels both like an echo from the past and a raw gaze into the present. The energetic, penetrating performance remains painfully relevant.



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A long, dark silence. Then a scream fills the space. Others follow. A tightly rhythmic drumming of feet rises, swells. "I am here, I am here, I am here..." voices chant in unison. But silence reclaims the space. Two central lights reveal a line of ten bodies, dressed in costumes, dresses, and other festive clothing. Their arms rest over each other's shoulders. They do not look at us—they stand with their backs turned.

Shahd Jabarin steps out of the chain of bodies. In striking silence, she slowly shows us the movements that will be central to the rest of the performance. They originate from the dabke, a rhythmic Palestinian folk dance traditionally performed at weddings and neighborhood gatherings. But this is not just a presentation. It feels like she is learning the movements, making them her own. Others in the line follow her—an image of transmission. After all, this traditional dance is passed down through generations by doing.

As more performers join in, the group's energy rises to a boiling point. Suddenly, another cry-lights flash on. The music by Nasser Al-Fares, arranged by Sam Serruys, blasts through the speakers. The hypnotic, piercing *mijwiz*, a traditional double-reed flute associated with dabke, takes center stage. The celebration now erupts in full.

It feels like we're attending a wedding party, with ten brilliant dancers giving themselves over to the dance with boundless energy and infectious joy. They express the joy of togetherness, of jumping, of movement and sharing this pleasure. At the same time, they show the Palestinian need to be part of the world.

Those who saw the original 2013 version will recognize that *Badke(remix)* follows the same structure as its predecessor. The concept remains powerful in its simplicity. In a seemingly endless dance, the performers exhaust themselves. Group dances, solos, and duets follow one another in rapid succession, sweat visibly pouring from their bodies. Countless variations unfold, with the dancers incorporating their own skills, merging dabke with acrobatics, street and breakdance, and contemporary movement. It's clearly about the energy that dance both holds and conveys.

Only a few elements are used to add political content. The set is once again strikingly bare. No folkloric decorations, no references to a specific place. Just a solitary water dispenser at center stage, next to a typical checkered plastic shopping bag, a clear reference to the current humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Yet the performance is not explicitly political. Of course, there are moments when it breaks through, bodies lying on the ground as if dead, or carried like corpses, dancers raising their fists, or staring at us directly, as if blinded by a police spotlight.



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A few times, the power suddenly cuts out. Energy is brutally interrupted as light and sound vanish. These interruptions are always met by the dancers with singing and rhythmic drumming, and the mood shifts. At every exuberant party, things can spiral out of control. This is no overwrought drama the dancers of laGeste and Stereo48 are presenting. The serious moments don't last long, and after each interruption, the dance celebration is restarted again and again.

<https://www.pzazz.theater.nl/recensies/dans/een-doordringende-remix-van-de-palestijnse-identiteit>

This circular pattern creates meaning; the dancing becomes a lifeline, a way to survive. It illustrates life in Palestinian territories, but also shows the compelling force of national rituals. At the same time, with the ongoing genocide committed by the state of Israel in Gaza, this remix can be read as a clear '*l'histoire se répète*' (history repeating itself).

There's also a recurring pattern in the relationship between the collective and individual body. Often, the group moves as one organism, a collective driven by rhythm, breath, sweat, energy. These are moments of pure shared power, until the collective falls apart again. Bodies suddenly do something unexpected, falling out of sync: a scream without cause, a spasmodic outburst, a hesitation that lasts just a bit too long. It feels like it's too much for them. Reality catches up. The illusion of celebration can no longer be maintained. It leaves a sense of isolation. The choreography doesn't build toward a moment of collective harmony; instead, it shows a picture of collision that continuously underlines how fragile togetherness is.

This makes what the dancers bring to the stage more than just movement. It feels like a testimony to their lives, their very existence. The performance radiates a sense of urgency, as if dancing is essential to life itself. A means of survival, of not disappearing.

At times, you're struck by the feeling that the dancers are moving through memories that aren't entirely their own. As if they're dancing for a home that exists only in their imagination. These scenes, often performed in silence, form the most powerful moments of the piece. It feels as though you're watching ghosts. The powerful final scene is the best example: the ten performers stand in a line, repeating the typical dabke movements with icy slowness to the muffled tones of music that keeps repeating but slowly fades out. Their faces are expressionless. Until everything once again ends in darkness.

Badke (remix) is not a performance you calmly watch and then analyze. As a viewer, you feel the pulse, the repetition, the shortness of breath. It's hard not to move along. The dancers claim space, with stomping feet, but also in moments of silence that speak just as loudly. They're not asking for pity. They show strength, surrender, a determination to create space where it has been denied.

Compared to the original *Badke*, this remix feels darker. Less exuberant, but no less powerful. The energy is still physical and infectious, but the undertone is sharper. The context has changed. It presents a group that, despite everything, refuses to be pinned down as victims – that keeps going. At the same time, they are not simply a symbol or representation of resistance against the violence of the Israeli state. Above all, they are dancers. People.