

## Review: Another Asherie success with collaboration ‘Odeon’



Photo by Christopher Duggan  
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11:32 a.m. Jun. 10, 2021

### **Grade: A**

Combining classical music with not-so-classical dance, Ephrat Asherie Dance blurs the lines in *Odeon*, a magnificent celebration of movement and art.

Despite Wednesday night’s ominous forecast, the only thunder came from the crowd seated facing the Rivers Green stage: Audience members were invited to respond vocally to anything that moved them, and Wednesday’s crowd was happy to oblige. Shouting and clapping at particularly difficult moves or powerful solo sections, the audience was welcomed into what was happening and ceased being merely spectators. Laughter erupted at two dancers’ head movements paired with simple percussion, a moment that looked and sounded not unlike a woodpecker mating ritual.

*Odeon*, created in collaboration between sister-brother duo Ephrat and Ehud Asherie, combines breaking, whacking, vogue, Latin hustle, Brazilian samba, hip-hop, house and West African dance with the compositional works of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Brazilian musician Ernesto Júlio de Nazareth.

The show is a celebration of uniqueness. The costumes all have similar characteristics, but no two are exactly the same. Similarly, all six dancers brought an individual personality and dance style while remaining an integral part of the collective. One dancer took a sensuous approach to Ephrat Asherie's choreography with fluid hip movements between poses, while another went a more static route, moving with an almost mechanical precision.

Instead of placing the four musicians in a poorly lit pit or backstage, *Odeon* – led by music director and pianist Ehud Asherie — places them front and center. (Well, front and downstage right.) They switched instruments frequently, and often interacted with the dancers; the percussionists even got involved in the on-stage choreography from time to time. Ephrat herself took up an instrument for a number, proceeding to dance while playing. The nonexistent division between dancer and musician created a work that flowed like a continuous and evolving conversation between the group of 10.

A story began to emerge amidst the lively music and frenetic movements: Dancers flirted, fought and killed their way through the hourlong piece, with the culmination feeling like it came moments after it began. This theatricality helped the piece stay accessible for audience members who may not have strong background knowledge of ballroom and club culture.

During the last moments of sunset, a trio took the stage, slowly becoming silhouetted against the sky and highlighting the remarkable nature of the Rivers Green stage, as the audience waited silently for the return of the music or a rhythm made by the dancers' stomping and clapping.

As the lights faded for the last time, the joy radiating off the artists once again performing together and in-person was infectious. Many audience

members stopped to pass on further congratulations to a couple of the performers as they left the courtyard. *Odeon* is one of the final works to open at the 2021 Spoleto festival, and the electric work serves as a wonderful final performance for this location.

*Odeon* is an intersection of the Asheries' unique interests. But as the audience took to the streets of Charleston, it felt like more than that — it felt like a celebration of family, of love and of an unmistakable return to art.

