

# The New York Times

## Reviews: A Wild Ride and a Nomadic Journey at River to River Festival



From left, Valerie Ho, Sidney Vault, Ousmane Wiles, Ephrat Asherie and Eriko Jimbo in "Riff this Riff that," at the River to River Festival in Manhattan.  
Credit: Darial Sneed

By Gia Kourlas | June 21, 2016

### **Ephrat Asherie**

"Riff this Riff that"

Ephrat Asherie's "Riff this Riff that," which rolled through the Atrium Plaza at 180 Maiden Lane on Monday afternoon (it repeated Tuesday), opens on an uncharacteristically subdued note — a point made clear by the wild ride that follows.

Six dancers, some sitting, some standing, congregate around a row of wooden stools and gaze at Ousmane Wiles as he eases forward into space and crouches, spinning back to them before dashing away again with sliding feet in reverse. He stops in place and snaps his fingers. Soon, the others ease away from the stools too and join in to create a percussive suite of bodies.

Ms. Asherie started out in ballet, but like for many who came of age in the 1990s, hip-hop took hold. There are no obvious sign of classical dance in “Riff this,” but Ms. Asherie makes space for just about everything else. Dance forms — from tap to swing and voguing — are knitted together throughout this production.

Ms. Asherie’s movement phrases — compact bursts of choreography with rapid-fire changes in rhythm and gestural articulation — bubble up and dissipate, quickly paving the way for something new. But it’s more than an exploration of motion and energy. Inspired by “The Spirit Moves: A History of Black Social Dance on Film, 1900–1986,” Mura Dehn’s excellent documentary, Ms. Asherie investigates the jazz roots of contemporary house, breaking and hip-hop.

“Riff this” shows Ms. Asherie’s entrancing qualities as a dancer: She is both tough and supple. But Ms. Asherie has much more room to riff on her ideas about tradition in dance; in its current form, the piece, just 25 minutes, feels like a beginning, not an ending. As problems go, that’s a good one.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/22/arts/dance/review-ephraat-asherie-will-rawls-river-to-river.html>