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Aluminum-Clad Dancers Beckon Viewers Into the Future

By Simone Peek

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"The Aluminum Show" is a combination of dancing and theatrics centered around a variety of aluminum props.

Moscow may already seem rather alien to some who visit the city, but this weekend and Monday, it has gotten even more out of this world. "The Aluminum Show" has descended on the capital with its convoy at a fitting location, the Cosmos Hotel.

"The Aluminum Show" combines dance and visual theater with, well, a lot of aluminum. It has been running for more than 10 years and has had 11 tours worldwide. This weekend, it landed in Moscow for the second time in two consecutive years.

The idea for the show came to Israeli-born creator and artistic director Ilan Azriel when he was in a hardware store and opened a box, and some small aluminum tubing fell to the floor. Azriel liked the "snake-like" material and started to examine its possibilities.

That is how the first show, with just six dancers, was born.

The result now is a rather bizarre performance that does not quite touch base with either dance or theater. The eagerness to use the shining silver material seems to take the upper hand in some acts, at the expense of the dance parts, not to mention the storyline.

But, perhaps one should not be too critical on either of these, since the show is meant to create an experience.

"Before everything else, the show is about fun," Azriel said. "Of course, there is a storyline and everything, but it's more about fun. Fun for all the family."

Judging from the reaction of the children in the audience, they did have a lot of fun. Their eyes almost popped out while looking at the cosmic show that came at them from all angles, and they were allowed to touch all of the aluminum that extended to them into the auditorium.

"I know people want to touch the material. That's why I bring the material from the stage into the audience," Azriel said. "The parents, the grandfathers play with it like children and they feel like children, and I think it is good to feel like that sometimes."

Since its start in 2003 the show has developed "from iPhone 1 to iPhone 5," Azriel said. It started with just dancers and tubes, but as more technology became available, Azriel expanded the show's repertoire further into the future.

Now a little aluminum-tube robot plays the lead. But there are also less technical creatures in the show, like a four-meter tall aluminum pillow-man that was skillfully put together in an assembly line onstage. After its "resurrection," the pillow-man took a walk through the audience.

Audience interaction comes at its peak when an enormous bundle of aluminum tubes grows into the audience. Spectators are forced to interact with each other, passing the tubes from one person to the next. Some children jumped up to help ward off the alien invasion of the crowd in the other corners of the hall.

Central to the show are the many dances performed with aluminum materials. In some cases, the costumed dancers look like giant silver snails with feet or are put in full body armor, dancing around without a head. The director said this was not easy for the cast.

"Before I bring the costumes to the dancers, I have to feel what is what," he said. "It's not fun. It's too hot inside. It's hard to maneuver and find your location within the stage. The dancers orient themselves by looking at the ceiling."

This makes the synchronized human-robot dance all the more impressive. After all, the show is 50 percent human, Azriel reminded.

Aluminum is used in everything. During parts of the show, it is falling from the sky or waving as a sheet through the air. But human performance and props are always intertwined and interacting, which leads to the remarkable achievement of forming a show around something as ordinary as aluminum.

Apart from the futuristic machines and materials, the show has a summer vibe. Upbeat dance music is played when dancers show their skills in tribal outfits.

A word of advice: The advertisement's "fun for all ages" notice should not be taken too literally. It is first and foremost a family activity. Young-spirited couples in the hall seemed also to have enjoyed the show, but a few formally dressed elders were definitely caught off-guard when about 40 cow-sized aluminum pillows were launched at the crowds.

After it wraps up its sequence of shows in Moscow on Monday, "The Aluminum Show" will travel to China, United States and then back to Europe.

"The Aluminum Show" runs until Monday at the Cosmos Hotel, located at 150 Prospekt Mira. Phone:+7 495-234-1375. aluminum-show.com.

Contact the author at artsreporter@imedia.ru

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